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PREFACE

India has recently experienced far-reaching constitutional changes. On 1 April 1937 there was inaugurated a system of provincial autonomy under which the most important duties of government are performed in eleven autonomous Provinces by Indian statesmen responsible to the local Legislatures. Moreover, the new Constitution provides that the introduction of provincial autonomy should be followed by the institution of a Federal system of government for the whole of India.

It has seemed to the International Labour Office that the opening of this new era in the constitutional history of India is a suitable time for the publication of a survey of industrial labour in those provinces of that great country which make up what is known as "British India". In so doing, the Office is continuing a task which originated in a resolution moved at the Seventh (1925) Session of the International Labour Conference by Mr. N. M. Joshi, Workers' Delegate of India.¹ That resolution asked that the Office should continue to collect and publish available information regarding the conditions of labour in Asiatic countries, and should undertake, as far as was possible, documentary enquiries into conditions of labour in those countries.

In pursuance of this resolution, and of the instructions of its Governing Body, the International Labour Office has regularly published in the weekly *Industrial and Labour Information* and the monthly *International Labour Review* information on conditions of labour in India and on the development of labour legislation, while the more important laws and orders have been published verbatim in the *Legislative Series*. In addition,

¹ *International Labour Conference, Seventh Session, Geneva, 1925, Vol. II, p. 837.*

special studies of Indian labour legislation and of the labour of women and children have appeared in the *Review*.¹

In preparing the present volume, the International Labour Office has drawn very largely on the Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India (the Whitley Commission), which was issued in 1931;² this Report together with the volumes of evidence given before the Commission, represents the results of what was probably the most thorough investigation into industrial conditions that has ever been made in any one country. Although there have been important changes in the industrial situation in India since the Report was issued — changes which have been due in no small measure to the recommendations of the Commission — the Report remains, and will no doubt long remain, the principal source of information about conditions of labour in India, as well as of suggestions for reform.

No attempt has been made in the present study to describe the conditions of industrial labour in India with the wealth of detail and example contained in the Report of the Whitley Commission; such a method would have been both supererogatory and unsuitable for the purposes of an international publication. Therefore, although extensive use has been made in a summarised form of information contained in the Royal Commission's Report, an arrangement has been adopted which has seemed more appropriate for readers who may be expected in many cases to have no specialised knowledge of Indian conditions. At the same time, more emphasis has been placed on the historical evolution of labour conditions in India. Finally, many other sources of information have been tapped, and the most recent statistical and other data have, as far as possible, been included.

The present volume is divided into ten chapters, the first being explanatory of the geographical, social and political setting of the problems of industrial labour in India, while the others deal successively with the nature and extent of industrial employment, labour legislation, industrial relations, employ-

¹ Cf. *International Labour Review*: RAJANI KANTA DAS, M.Sc., Ph.D.: "Labour Legislation in India", Vol. XXII, No. 5, November 1930; "Woman Labour in India", Vol. XXIV, Nos. 4 and 5, October and November 1931; "Child Labour in India", Vol. XXVIII, No. 6, December 1933, and Vol. XXIX, No. 1, January 1934.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, H.M. Stationery Office, London, 1931 (Cmd. 3833), 4s. 6d.

ment and unemployment, health and safety, hours of work, wages, standard of living, and housing and welfare; a short concluding note has also been added. An attempt has been made, both in the footnotes to the text and to the statistical tables, to acknowledge as fully as possible the sources of information; a detailed table of contents is intended to facilitate reference to the text.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

India is still an essentially agricultural country, but modern industries, such as plantations,¹ factories, mines and railways, have been developing rapidly and employ an increasingly large number of workers. The working and living conditions of these workers form the subject-matter of this study.

Conditions of work and life are, however, closely related to, and greatly influenced by geography, demography and civilisation. Topography and climate affect the growth of population and cultural patterns, and social, political and industrial institutions condition the trends of social policy and social legislation. Before undertaking a study of industrial labour, therefore, it is necessary to give a short description of these factors.

1. — Land and Population

According to the census of 1931, India has an area of 1,808,679 square miles. The main natural division of India is into north and south, the dividing line being the Vindhya range, which lies almost east and west along the Tropic of Cancer. North India extends to the Himalayas, which cover a distance of 1,500 miles from east to west and include some of the highest mountains in the world; it is mainly composed of the Indo-Gangetic Valley, which comprises the large river systems of the Indus, the Brahmaputra and the Ganges, and is a very fertile and

¹ The word "industry" is used in this study in its narrower sense and excludes "agriculture". Plantations, however, are included as being large-scale enterprises employing a considerable number of workers and operating in accordance with industrial methods.

densely populated region. South India consists mainly of a high triangular plateau, bounded on the west by an almost continuous warp known as the Western Ghats, and on the east by the Eastern Ghats, broken by the valleys of the principal rivers of southern India.

India lies between 6° and 37° N. latitude and 61° and 101° E. longitude. Both the geographical situation and the topographical features of the country make the meteorological conditions extremely diversified, varying from the tropical and sub-tropical climates of the plains to the temperate and cold climates of the hills. The most important factor in the meteorology of India is the monsoon, which divides the year into two well-defined seasons, the wet and the dry. The temperature varies from 23° to 126°, and the annual rainfall from 5 inches to 500 inches.¹

As a result of this great diversity in topography and climate, the flora and fauna of India are both extremely varied and abundant, and ensure a potentially rich supply of vegetable and animal resources. Mineral resources, on the other hand, while rich in variety are poor in quantity, with the exception of iron, manganese and mica, of which latter mineral India has almost a monopoly. India's coal resources are poor in both quantity and quality, and are far from sufficient for the exploitation of the iron ore resources and for other needs of modern industrial life. India's petroleum resources are also small in quantity; the potential water power, however, is very considerable, and has now begun to be developed.

These special features of the geography of India are reflected in her civilisation. To the variations in topography, climate, flora and fauna, and natural resources correspond wide differences in cultural patterns and social institutions, as evidenced by the richness and variety of art, literature, philosophy and religion in India. Nevertheless, the existence of facilities for communication within the greater part of the country has led to the growth of social relationships among different racial groups and created a profound cultural unity in the midst of diversity; and the comparative isolation of this great country from the rest of the world has preserved the conditions for the evolution of a civilisation that is unique and specifically Indian.

¹ East India (Census, 1931), *Abstracts of Tables*, H.M. Stationery Office, London (Cmd. 4194), 1932, p. 4.

While it is not known exactly when, or from what sources, India was first populated, three groups of elements in the ancient population can be distinguished with confidence: the jungle tribes, the Dravidians, and the Aryans. The oldest elements would appear to be certain tribes which live in the hills and forests in the centre of the country and still speak distinctive languages. It seems probable that these people at one time occupied a much wider area and that they were pressed back into the jungles by immigrants who eventually spread over almost the whole country. These immigrants are now represented by the elements known as Dravidians, though the name "Dravidian" properly denotes a group of languages. The third section of the population is the Aryans — the name "Aryan" also properly applies to a group of languages — whose arrival from the north-west is almost a matter of history. To these older elements of the population came many additions in the course of the centuries — the Scythians and the Huns, the Muslim conquerors and immigrants from Persia, Afghanistan and beyond, the Jews, Arabs and Armenians, the Parsees who left Persia under the pressure of Islam, Africans and Asiatics imported as slaves, and, since 1500 A.D., the Portuguese and other Europeans, whose presence has resulted in the Eurasians, now known as Anglo-Indians.

The result of the presence in India of so many different elements of population is a wide diversity of speech. The bulk of South India speaks Dravidian, but there are several distinct languages which are not mutually intelligible. In North India there are numerous Aryan languages, modified in varying degree by Dravidian and other contacts, the most important group of which is known as Hindi and is spoken in the Gangetic plain. These languages shade off into each other, and, in addition there is a *lingua franca* known as Hindustani, which resulted from the intercourse of Persian-speaking invaders with the Hindi-speaking peoples.¹

Of more immediate importance to this study, however, is the growth of the population of India. According to the census of 1931, the total population is 352.8 million, showing an increase of 33.9 million, or 10.6 per cent. since 1921. With the exception of the decade 1881-1891, this increase of population was the

¹ MORELAND and CHATTERJEE: *A Short History of India*, 1936, pp. 4-6.

highest yet recorded; the following table shows the extent and rate of increase for each decade since 1881 :

INCREASE OF POPULATION IN INDIA (1881-1931).¹

Periods	Population (million)	Actual increase (million)	Total increase (per cent.)
1881-1891	287.31	27.70	13.2
1891-1901	294.36	4.37	2.5
1901-1911	315.15	19.00	7.1
1911-1921	318.94	3.69	1.2
1921-1931	352.83	33.86	10.6

¹ *Census of India, 1931, Vol. I, Part I, p. 5.* This and corresponding reports for earlier censuses are referred to hereafter as *Census of India*.

The outstanding features of the movement of population in India are the high birth and death rates, which were respectively, on the basis of quinquennial averages ending in 1930, 38.3 and 24.3 per mille in British India, as compared with, for example, 17.2 and 12.3 in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.¹ The average length of life in India is low as compared with that in most of the Western countries; according to the census of 1921, the average for males and females was respectively 24.8 and 24.7 years, or a general average of 24.75 years in India as compared with 55.6 years in England and Wales. It was found to have decreased further in 1931, being 23.2 and 22.8 years for males and females respectively.²

The principal causes of the high birth rate in India are general and early marriage, the low standard of living and absence of conscious control over the size of the family. The high death rate is mainly to be attributed to low vitality and the prevalence of various epidemics and tropical diseases, such as cholera, plague, smallpox, *kala-azar*, malaria and dysentery; of 24.89 deaths per mille in 1931, for instance, about three-fifths were caused by various fevers.³ More serious even than the death rate, however, is the general debility brought about partly by these

¹ Including Indian States (*Statistical Year-Book of the League of Nations, 1933-1934, p. 50*).

² *Census of India, 1931, p. 98; Annuaire statistique, Paris, 1933, Divers pays, p. 264* (the figure for England and Wales refers to 1920).

³ *Statistical Abstract for British India, 1935, p. 515.*

diseases and partly by undernourishment and insanitary conditions.

The mean density of population increased from 167 per square mile in 1901 to 195 per square mile in 1931.¹ This density is certainly lower than that of such countries as Great Britain, Japan, Germany and Italy; expressed in square kilometres the population density of these States is respectively 195, 173, 146 and 135 as compared with 75 per square kilometre in India.² In India, however, large areas are uninhabitable, while other parts are extremely congested.

Accurate statistics of the national income of India are not available, but according to official and semi-official estimates, the average annual *per capita* income would amount to Rs.100 for the rural population in the Madras Presidency and Rs.85 for rural areas and Rs.100 for urban areas in the Bombay Presidency.³ The result is that, to quote the Director of Public Information, "the vast majority of the rural population of India lives perpetually on the very margin of subsistence",⁴ and there is enough evidence to show that the situation of the majority of town-dwellers is not materially different.

There is as yet no general system of compulsory education in India, and the great mass of the population is still illiterate. According to the census of 1931, the total literate population is only 28 million (24 million males and 4 million females), or about 8 per cent. as compared with 22.6 million or 7.1 per cent. in 1921. Taking only persons of 5 years of age and over, the number of literates per thousand were 95 (156 males and 29 females) in 1931 as compared with 82 (139 males and 21 females) in 1921.⁵

The responsibility for primary education in British India rests upon Provincial Governments. Since 1918 eight Provinces have passed Primary Education Acts authorising the introduction of compulsory education by local option in urban and rural areas, either for boys alone or for both boys and girls from 6 to 10 years of age, and in some cases education may be extended to a longer period.⁶ Up to 1934-1935, however, only 166 municipalities and

¹ East India (Census, 1931): *Abstract of Tables*, p. 4.

² Compiled from *International Year-Book of Agricultural Statistics*, 1932-1933, pp. 3-9.

³ *India in 1930-1931*, p. 156.

⁴ *India in 1930-1931*, p. 152.

⁵ Refers to the whole of India (*Census of India*, 1931, pp. 324-325).

⁶ *Indian Year-Book*, 1932-1933, p. 347.

3,138 rural areas out of a total of 501,057 towns and villages in British India had introduced compulsory primary education ;¹ and whereas the number of children of school-going age (i.e. from 5 to 14 years) was about 67 million in 1931, the total number of scholars of all ages, including persons under 15, amounted to only 12.82 million in 1934-1935.²

2. — Religious and Social Institutions

The most important religion in India is Hinduism, which is professed by about 69 per cent. of the population. Next comes Islam, to which belong 22 per cent. of the population, and among other faiths are Buddhism, Christianity, and Sikhism (mostly in the Punjab), claiming among their adherents 3.6 per cent., 1.7 per cent. and 1.2 per cent. of the population respectively.³ Animism also exists among the aboriginal tribes.

Religion plays a great part in the life of the people of India. Hinduism is not only a faith but also a mode of life, determining what its adherents may eat and drink, their occupations and their social customs. The doctrine of ancestor-worship has an important influence on marriage institutions, and the law of *Karma* (the doctrine that pleasures and pains in the present life depend upon the deeds of a previous life) also affects the social attitude. The caste system, child marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage and other similar customs are all associated with popular Hindu religion. Although such movements as the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj have done much to further religious and social reforms, there still remains a great gap between popular religion and modern socio-economic ideals.

The most important social institution in India, especially with the Hindus, is the caste system, the origins of which appear to go back to the pre-historic period. Reference has already been made to the arrival in India of the Aryans, who, through functional differentiation and division of labour, grouped themselves into three distinct classes : the Brahmins, or priests, the Kshatriyas or warriors, and the Vaisyas or tradesmen. These three

¹ *Education in India in 1934-1935*, p. 47 ; *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. I, Part II, p. 12.

² Compiled from *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1935, Table No. 13 ; *Education in British India in 1934-1935*, p. 6.

³ *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1935, Table No. 7.

classes, together with the Sudras or servants, formed the four original castes, but in the course of time these four castes divided and subdivided into innumerable castes and subcastes. In 1931, for instance, the number of principal castes alone amounted to 152.¹ In addition, and this is of great significance in the evolution of the caste system, there arose an untouchable class consisting partly of the lower castes and partly of outcastes. The total number of the untouchables, or the depressed or exterior castes, as they are variously called, was estimated by the census of 1931 to be over 50 million in the whole of India.²

The essential elements of the caste system are endogamy, a hierarchy headed by the Brahmins, restriction on social intercourse (e.g. in the matter of food and drink), occupational discrimination, and inequality before the law. Moreover, the untouchables are often barred from using public places, e.g. schools, wells, bathing places, temples and burning ghats (cremation grounds), and, in certain provinces, even their contact or proximity is regarded as a pollution.³ In recent times, however, the rigour of caste and untouchability has been modified or mitigated even in the extreme south, where untouchability has always been prevalent. Among the factors which are gradually changing the caste system may be mentioned the present system of government, Western education, reform and religious movements, e.g. the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj, the national movements for political reform, e.g. the Indian National Congress, modern industrialism, modern means of communication, and the Harijan (children of God) movement, i.e. the movement under the leadership of Mr. Gandhi to do away with untouchability.

The joint-family system is also an important social institution in India. In addition to husband, wife and their unmarried and dependent children as in the West, the family in India may contain a married son and his wife and children, a married or widowed daughter and her children, as well as other relatives. The joint-family system is the remnant of the primitive tribal community and is found in all classes of Indian communities, with both patri-lineal and matri-lineal traditions. The system has the advantage of ensuring mutual help among the members of the

¹ Compiled from *Census of India, 1931, Vol. I, Part II, p. 554.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 535.

³ East India (Census, 1931), *Abstract of Tables*, p. 6.

family and is of great benefit to the poor, the sick and the aged ; but it often leads to family discord and encourages idleness and dependence even among the able-bodied. The joint-family system is, however, disintegrating under modern social and economic forces, such as the rising spirit of independence and self-respect among the younger generation, the increasing struggle for existence and the migration of able-bodied members of the family to industrial centres.

Child marriage is directly traceable to the joint-family system. Marriage is universal in India and may take place at the instance of the family even when the bride and bridegroom are still in their childhood. In 1931, for instance, the number of boys and girls who were married before the age of 11 years was respectively 2.3 and 5.0 millions.¹ Various movements have been started to further the abolition of child marriage, and, under the influence of education, the improvement of the position of women and legislation, it is becoming less frequent.

The custom of *purdah* or seclusion of women is still common in India. It is usually said to have originated under Muslim rule, when the subjects adopted the practice of their conquerors, but there is some evidence that it existed in India before the Muslim conquest. Like other old social customs, however, the *purdah* system tends to disappear under modern social and economic conditions, and this tendency is being strongly accelerated by the Indian women's movement.

3. — Political Organisation

The political history of India falls into three great epochs : (1) Hindu rule from ancient times to the middle of the thirteenth century, when the country was divided into innumerable principalities, each under a separate ruler ; (2) Muslim predominance from the middle of the thirteenth century up to the middle of the eighteenth century; and (3) British rule, which was established over part of the country by the East India Company in 1757 and was gradually extended, being transferred to the Crown in 1858. Under British rule this vast country has achieved a higher degree of political unity than at any previous period, though something

¹ Compiled from *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1935, Table No. 12.

near it had been realised under the Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556-1605).

Under the present Constitution, there are two main types of political organisation in India: the autonomous Provinces, or those territories which are directly under British rule, and the Indian States, which owe allegiance to the British Crown but are largely independent as far as their internal affairs are concerned. The new Constitution aims at uniting the whole of India into one Federal State.

The total area of the Indian States is about two-fifths of all India and, according to the census of 1931, their population a little over one-fifth¹ of that of the whole country, as shown in the table below:

POLITICAL DIVISIONS OF INDIA IN 1931¹

Divisions	Area		Population	
	Square miles	Per cent. of total	Millions	Per cent. of total
British Provinces	1,096,171	60.6	271.52	70.9
Indian States . .	712,508	39.4	81.31	23.1
All India	1,808,679	100.0	352.83	100.0

¹ East India (Census, 1931), *Abstract of Tables*, p. 7.

There are 562 Indian States, ranging from a small State of a few acres to States which compare with some European countries both in area and population. Of these States the most important are Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore, Kashmir, Gwalior, Baroda, and Indore.² The relations between these States and Great Britain, which is known as the Paramount Power, are settled by treaty; generally speaking, it may be said that the States are

¹ Excluding Burma, which has been separated from India and which has an area of 233,492 and a population of 14.6 million, these proportions would be 45 and 24 per cent. respectively.

² The population (in millions) of these States and their area (in square miles in brackets) is as follows: Hyderabad (82,698), 14.4; Mysore (29,326), 6.5; Travancore (7,625), 3.0; Kashmir and Jammu (84,516), 3.6; Gwalior (26,367), 3.5; Baroda (8,164), 2.4; Indore (9,902), 1.3; cf. East India (Census of 1931): *Abstract of Tables*, p. 9.

independent in respect of their internal affairs, but have entrusted their relations with foreign powers as well as with other States within the Indian Empire to the Paramount Power.¹

The special status of the Indian States is reflected in their relationship to the International Labour Organisation. They belong to the Organisation as parts of India, but the labour legislation passed by the Indian Legislature does not apply in their territories, and Conventions ratified by the Government of India are binding only on the autonomous Provinces and not on the Indian States. Modern industrialism, however, has already made its appearance in some of the States and considerable numbers of workers are employed in factories, mines, plantations and railways. In 1931, for instance, there were 1,342 large industrial establishments in the Indian States and the average daily number of workers was 198,550.² Since they do not form a part of British India and no accurate data on the conditions of the work and life of these workers are available, they have been left out of consideration in this study.

British India is governed by a Central Government (the Government of India) and by Provincial Governments. The Central Government consists of a Governor-General, an Executive Council of six members, three of whom are Indians, and a Legislature of two Chambers, the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State, with respectively 145 and 60 members, of whom 104 and 33 are elected. The Governor-General or Viceroy, as he is commonly called, is responsible to the Secretary of State for India, who is a member of the British Cabinet.

Up to the end of the period covered by this report, the Provincial Governments were 15 in number, each with its separate local administration. In 10 out of these Provinces, namely the Presidencies of Bengal, Bombay and Madras, and the United Provinces, the Punjab, Bihar and Orissa, the Central Provinces, Burma, Assam and the North West Frontier Province,³ the Local Government consisted of a Governor, an Executive Council of not more than four members and two or more Ministers, and a

¹ *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1935, pp. 814-821.

² Under the Federation proposals, States acceding to the Federation would accept the Federal legislative power in respect of some of their internal affairs.

³ The North West Frontier was made a Governor's Province in 1919, and in 1936, Orissa and Sind were made separate provinces.

Legislative Council.² The remaining five Provinces are directly under the administration of Chief Commissioners who are technically agents of the Central Government. The Provinces vary a good deal both in size and population, as shown in the following table :

AREA AND POPULATION IN BRITISH PROVINCES, 1931¹

Province ¹	Area (square miles)	Population
Bengal	77,521	50,114,002
United Provinces.	106,248	48,408,763
Madras	142,277	46,740,107
Bihar and Orissa.	83,054	37,677,576
Punjab	99,200	23,580,852
Bombay	123,679	21,930,601
Central Provinces and Berar.	99,920	15,507,723
Burma	233,492	14,667,146
Assam	55,014	8,622,251
North West Frontier Province	13,518	2,425,076
Delhi	573	636,246
Ajmer-Merwara	2,711	560,292
Baluchistan	54,228	463,508
Coorg	1,593	163,327
Andaman and Nicobar Islands.	6,143	29,463
Total.	1,096,171	271,526,933

¹ *Census of India, Vol. I, Part II, pp. 2 and 3.*

A Province is divided into districts, the district being the unit of political organisation in British India, and at the head of each district is an officer, who is variously termed, in different parts of the country, a Magistrate and Collector or a Deputy Commissioner. Besides exercising executive functions, the Magistrate and Collector also administers justice in all criminal cases, while the administration of justice in civil cases is entrusted to specially appointed judges. The district judiciary, whether on the criminal or civil side, is responsible to the High or Chief Court located at the seat of each major Local Government. An appeal from the latter court may be made in certain cases to the Privy Council in London. A district is generally divided into several subdivisions, each under a subdivisional officer and each comprising several

² This system has been replaced under the new Constitution, which has created eleven autonomous Provinces with wide powers of self-government ; at the same time, Burma has been separated from India.

thanas or police stations under the control of a police sub-inspector.

4. — Industrial Systems

Up to the end of the eighteenth century India was mainly a country of self-sufficing village economy. Agriculture was by far the most important occupation, and was supplemented by arts and crafts, such as weaving, carpentry, blacksmithing, pottery-making, oil-pressing and leather work, as well as by the personal services of village menials or servants, such as washermen, barbers and scavengers. But the line of demarcation between agriculture and handicrafts was not very sharp inasmuch as the cultivator often resorted to home industry in the off-season, and artisans, village menials and even other classes of people had farmland which they often cultivated with hired help. The demand for rare goods was supplied by the fair which was periodically held in the village or in the immediate neighbourhood.

As royal residences, places of pilgrimage or seaports grew into towns, some of the arts and crafts achieved proficiency and established for themselves more than local reputation. Banking and trading arose to facilitate the marketing of their products. The *hundi* or note of credit was devised for the transfer of money, and partnership developed among traders and the guild system among craftsmen. While some of the crafts were spread over a number of towns, others were localised in some particular towns, such as muslin at Dacca and calico at Calicut.

It was mostly the products of arts and crafts, together with spices and some other rare products, that formed the basis of trade between India and the West, and attracted Western European nations, including the British, to the shores of India. The East India Company, which entered India very early in the seventeenth century and established British rule in the middle of the eighteenth century, carried on trade in these and other commodities up to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, to which it made an important contribution by helping to supply the new industry with raw materials and to sell its finished products in India.

The immediate effect of the Industrial Revolution in England was a change in the nature of India's foreign trade. Instead of rare products as in the past, staple commodities, i.e., raw mate-

rials, foodstuffs and manufactured goods, formed the basis of her imports and exports. India thus entered into a new epoch of foreign trade, which steadily expanded with increasing facilities in transportation and banking. In the period from 1864-1865 to 1928-1929, for instance, the quinquennial averages increased from Rs.88 crores to Rs.604 crores or eightfold in the value of merchandise. The world crisis brought a fall in the value of the total trade in merchandise to Rs.268 crores in 1933-1934, but in 1935-1936 the figure rose to Rs.301 crores.¹

The most significant effect of the Industrial Revolution in England was on India's industrial systems, including both agriculture and industry. On the one hand, the demand for raw materials and foodstuffs led to some changes in the organisation and products of agriculture; on the other hand, the existing Indian industrial system was modified both by the importation of manufactured goods and the gradual growth of factory industries.

In spite of these changes, India has remained a predominantly agricultural country. The present position of modern industrialism in India may be illustrated by the fact that only 11 per cent. of the present population live in towns or industrial centres,² that over seven-tenths of the export trade consists of raw materials and foodstuffs, and that about three-quarters of the imports consists of wholly or partially manufactured goods.³ As regards the occupational distribution of the population of India, the following table shows that, even in 1931, only 17.6 per cent. were employed in trade, transport and industry as compared with 65.8 per cent. in agriculture :

¹ *Review of the Trade of India, 1933-1934*, p. 174 ; 1935-1936, p. 178.

² *Census of India, 1931*, p. 44.

³ *Review of the Trade of India, 1935-1936*, Tables Nos. 4 and 5.

OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN INDIA, 1931¹

Occupation	Principal occupation ²			Subsidiary occupation males and females	Total	
	Males	Females	Total		Number	Per cent.
I. Exploitation of animals and vegetation . .	74,441,002	28,853,437	103,294,439	7,465,885	110,760,324	65.80
II. Exploitation of minerals .	259,583	86,417	346,000	58,262	404,262	0.24
III. Industry . .	10,797,527	4,554,426	15,351,953	2,172,029	17,523,982	10.38
IV. Transport. .	2,099,198	242,208	2,341,406	437,114	2,778,520	1.65
V. Trade . . .	5,785,616	2,127,981	7,913,597	1,423,372	9,336,969	5.53
VI. Public force .	834,453	7,024	841,477	99,849	941,323	0.56
VII. Public administration .	962,741	32,543	995,284	158,679	1,153,963	0.69
VIII. Professions and liberal arts	1,980,260	323,881	2,310,141	414,025	2,724,166	1.61
IX. Persons living principally on their income	168,829	47,045	215,874	65,081	280,955	0.16
X. Domestic service	2,094,487	8,803,790	10,898,217	1,775,833	12,674,110	7.51
XI. Insufficiently described occupations . .	4,599,238	3,179,404	7,778,642	721,047	8,499,689	5.03
XII. Unproductive	1,054,878	570,969	1,625,847	122,888	1,748,735	1.04
Total ³ . .	105,086,333	48,829,717	153,916,050	14,914,064	168,830,114	100

¹ Including Indian States. Compiled from *Statistical Abstract for British India, 1935*, Tables Nos. 17 and 18.

² Earners, plus working dependants.

³ The figures for males, females and total (column 6) include 2,521, 595 and 3,116 earners respectively whose occupations were not returned.

As noted above, the Industrial Revolution led to changes in the organisation and products of Indian agriculture. Instead of producing almost exclusively for household consumption as in the past, agriculture began to adapt itself also to market production and this process advanced with the increasing demand for raw materials and foodstuffs. The introduction of money for

revenue assessment and interest payment also led many cultivators to produce crops for sale. Moreover, the Crimean War of 1855 and the American Civil War of 1861-1866, the first interfering with the importation of flax and hemp and the latter with that of cotton, also helped in increasing the production of jute and cotton, the cultivation of which had already begun. Although a large proportion of Indian agriculture is still devoted to production for household consumption, as is natural in a country of small holdings and large population, the commercialised aspect of Indian agriculture is indicated by the fact that large tracks of territories are wholly devoted to market crops, e.g. jute in Bengal, wheat in the Punjab and cotton in the Bombay Presidency. Moreover, agricultural products form the most important part of India's foreign trade. The value of cotton, jute and rice exports, for instance, amounted to Rs.33.77, 13.70 and 10.94 crores respectively in 1935-1936.¹

Nevertheless, much of Indian agriculture is still carried on as it has been for many centuries, and the introduction of improvements is made extremely difficult by the following circumstances: (1) the small and unprofitable size of the holding, being not more than five acres on the average in the East and South, while not more than half of the holdings exceed that limit elsewhere; there are also innumerable cultivators whose total holdings amount to one acre or less, and smallholdings often consist of tiny plots scattered about the village area;² (2) the low productive power of the soil due to constant cultivation without manuring or fertilising, the farmyard manure being burnt as fuel for the lack of a cheap substitute; (3) the shortage of water supply due partly to the unequal and uneven distribution of rainfall throughout the year or the region, and partly to the absence of sufficient irrigation, the irrigated area amounting to only 50 million acres or one-fifth of the total area sown;³ (4) the inferiority in quality, though not in quantity, of livestock, due partly to ignorance of scientific breeding and feeding, and partly to the opposition of Hindus to the killing of cattle; (5) the lack of sufficient farm capital and the high rate of interest, the latter rising as high as 75 or 100 per cent. in some cases; although co-

¹ *Review of the Trade of India, 1935-1936*, Table No. 7.

² *India in 1930-1931*, p. 158.

³ *Abridged Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, 1928*, p. 35.

operative credit societies were started in 1904 and their share capital and reserves amounted to Rs.11.80 and Rs.9.78 crores respectively in 1935-1936,¹ more than three-quarters of the Indian cultivators are still heavily indebted; (6) the restriction of farming mostly to the production of food, over four-fifths of the arable land being devoted to the cultivation of food crops. In these circumstances, Indian agriculture is neither progressive nor prosperous, and by far the majority of the cultivators are very poor.

Among the various measures taken by the Government for improving agriculture the following may be mentioned: (1) introduction of improved varieties of staple crops; (2) improvement of livestock, farm implements and irrigation wells; (3) control of diseases and pests; (4) easier credit and lower rate of interest on loans; (5) greater market facilities; (6) demonstration of improved methods; (7) agricultural education in high schools and colleges; and (8) rural reconstruction, for which the Government of India has sanctioned, for 1935-1936, the grant of one crore of rupees to provincial governments for undertaking village reconstruction along such lines as the improvement of water supply, drainage, roads, sanitation, consolidation of land holdings, and anti-malaria campaigns, in addition to other forms of village welfare work.

While the greatest change brought about by the Industrial Revolution in industrial methods in India was the introduction of organised industry, indigenous handicrafts still hold a predominant place in the economic system and various influences have contributed in recent years to fortify their position. Among these influences may be mentioned: the development of nationalism, which has given rise to the *Swadeshi* (use of country-made goods) and the *Khadi* (handwoven cloth out of hand-spun cotton) movements, thus creating a new demand for indigenous products and giving a new impetus to indigenous industries; the capacity of some arts and crafts to meet special demands and the reorganisation of others by the use of modern scientific methods, inventions and market facilities; and finally, the new economic policy of the Central and Provincial Governments — the latter of which are

¹ Refers to the banks with capital and reserves of Rs.5 lakhs and over. Cf. *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1938, Table No. 184.

directly responsible for industries — which aims at the revival and development of small industries.

Handicrafts still supply the bulk of India's requirements in manufactured goods. Among the most important handicrafts may be mentioned those producing cotton and silk fabrics, shawls, embroidery, fine gold and silver work, stone, ivory, and wood carving, brass, copper and metal wares, and the wire and tinsel industry. Since most of these products are generally produced and consumed locally, it is difficult to estimate their volume or value. But hand-loom weaving is the most important of these industries, and the number of hand-looms in all Provinces, excepting Bombay, the United Provinces and Central Provinces and Berar, amounted to about two million in 1921.¹ Moreover, the quantity of hand-loom fabrics produced has tended to increase in recent years, rising from 284 million yards in 1896-1897 to 1,148 million yards in 1920-1921,² and 1,404 million in 1929-1930 and 1,660 million in 1935-1936.³

As to organised industry, although its beginning may be traced to the early years of the nineteenth century, when the East India Company started the cultivation of indigo on a large scale in Bengal, it was not until after the middle of the century that it really began to develop. One of the obstacles in the way of foreign investment, the trade monopoly of the East India Company in India, was removed as early as 1833, but it was not until the transfer of the Government from the Company to the Crown in 1858, the pacification of the country after the Mutiny and the gradual expansion of British rule, that foreign investment received encouragement. The activities of the Public Works Department, created early in the fifties for the construction of roads and railways,⁴ opened up new market opportunities, and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the improvement of ocean shipping facilitated the importation of machinery.

The financing of organised industry in India was at first undertaken mostly by British capital, and even to-day a considerable amount of capital in India is British. In 1934-1935, for instance, 871 joint-stock companies with a paid-up capital of

¹ Compiled from *Census of India*, 1921, p. 270.

² *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour*, 1921, No. 16, p. 3.

³ *Report on Hand-loom Weaving Industry in the Bombay Presidency* (by S. V. TELANG), Government of Bombay, 1932, p. 4; *Special Tariff Board Report on the Cotton Industry*, 1933, p. 104.

⁴ Includes also irrigation, public buildings and military barracks.

£573 million, though registered abroad, were operating in British India.¹ In recent years Indian capital has been invested to an increasing extent in modern industry, as indicated by the rise of joint-stock companies registered in India. From 1,309 companies with a paid-up capital of Rs.29 crores in 1895-1896, the number of these companies rose to 9,710 with a paid-up capital of Rs.289.4 crores in 1935-1936.² The rise of banking and the improvement of the currency system has helped the development of modern industrialism in India.

An important factor in the development of organised industry has been the development of internal transportation. By 1935-1936, the total length of the metalled roads was 82,284 miles and that of unmetalled roads, 224,433 miles.³ Of particular importance in a vast country like India are, however, the railways. Railways were first built in India in 1853 and, by 1873, 5,697 miles of railway were open to the public. In 1935-1936 the mileage had risen to 43,118.⁴ From the very beginning, the railways have been public utility services in India, but the railway policy of Government has varied at different periods: from 1853-1869, construction was carried out by private companies under a guarantee of profit; from 1870 to 1878, construction was undertaken directly by Government; since 1879 construction has been done partly by Government and partly by private companies, the latter receiving financial help and free land but no guarantee of profit. In granting financial help or the guarantee of profit, however, the Government reserved the right of purchasing the railways at the end of stipulated periods, and, as a result, the Government of India had acquired the ownership of three-fourths, and the direct management of over two-fifths, of the total route mileage by 1935-1936.⁵

Plantations were among the earliest organised industries in

¹ *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1938, Table No. 176. In the case of the companies incorporated abroad, it is difficult to determine the exact amount of capital invested in India; they often do business also in other countries.

² *Statistics of British India*, 1922, Vol. I, p. 97; *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1938, Table No. 176; the figures for 1895-1896 include those of the Indian States.

³ *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1938, Table No. 232.

⁴ *Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways*, 1935-1936, Vol. II, p. 8.

⁵ The Government of India owned 31,783 miles and managed 19,133 miles of railways on 31 March 1936; *Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways*, 1935-1936, Vol. II, pp. 8 and 9.

India, especially those concerned with the production of tea, coffee and, to a small extent, rubber. Some idea of the growth of the plantation industry may be had from the increase in paid-up capital invested by the joint-stock companies, which rose from Rs.3.67 crores in 1895-1896 to Rs.15.39 crores in 1935-1936. Moreover, the paid-up capital of the joint-stock companies registered abroad, but operating in India, amounted to £29.7 million in 1935-1936.¹

Although the coffee plant was introduced into India in the sixteenth century and cultivation was started in Bengal early in the nineteenth century, coffee plantations began to flourish only after 1860. The industry suffered from borer beetle and leaf blight in the second half of the nineteenth century and has met with strong foreign competition, especially from Brazil, in recent years. The area under coffee crops increased from 116,411 acres in 1919-1920 to 188,035 acres in 1935-1936, and of the latter, 81,997 acres were in British India.² The coffee industry is confined mostly to the south, comprising the Madras Presidency and Coorg and the States of Mysore, Travancore and Cochin.

Rubber is grown mainly in Southern India and Burma ; its cultivation was introduced into India in the second half of last century. As rubber is produced mostly for export, the world slump in rubber in 1930 greatly affected Indian production. Quotas were, however, assigned to India and Burma by the understanding arrived at by the International Rubber Growers' Association early in 1934.³ The area under rubber, the greater part of which is in Burma, rose from 118,536 acres in 1919 to 187,151 acres in 1935.⁴

The most important plantation industry in India is tea, which is grown both in the north and the south, the chief centres being Assam, Bengal, Madras and Travancore. Although experiments were made early in the nineteenth century, real progress in tea planting began only about 1851. By 1859, 51 tea gardens had been opened in different parts of the country,

¹ Includes Indian States. Compiled : *Statistics of British India*, 1922, Vol. I, p. 109 ; *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1938, Tables Nos. 176 and 180.

² *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1908, Vol. III, p. 63 ; *Indian Coffee Statistics*, 1935-1936, pp. 1, 3, 5.

³ *The Times*, 30 April 1934, p. 14.

⁴ *Indian Rubber Statistics*, 1926, p. 4 ; 1935, p. 8 ; refers to the area tapped during the year.

although most of them were located in Assam. After some reverses the industry became well established by 1869,¹ and since then there has been steady progress, in spite of some severe crises. Tea is produced mostly for the foreign market, but the domestic consumption of tea has also been increasing rapidly in recent years; from 8.5 millions lbs. in 1896-1897 the domestic consumption increased to 70 million lbs. in 1935-1936.² The area under tea increased from 528,000 acres in 1905 to 826,800 acres in 1935; the production and export of tea increased from 221 million and 217 million lbs. respectively in 1905 to 433 million and 380 million lbs. respectively in 1932, but dropped to 396 million and 313 million lbs. respectively in 1935.³

Mining is another important branch of organised industry in India. With the development of railways and factories, the mining industry began to use modern industrial methods and considerable progress has been made in recent years. The most important minerals mined in British India are coal, petroleum, lead, manganese, iron, mica, limestone and tin.

The growth of the mining industry may be roughly gauged by the increase in the amount of capital invested in them by joint-stock companies. The amount of paid-up capital rose from Rs.1.9 crores in 1895-1896 to Rs.39.59 crores in 1935-1936. In the latter year, foreign joint-stock companies, although registered abroad, had £24 million invested in various mining industries in British India.⁴ The increase in the value of minerals produced is another indication of the growing importance of mining industries. From Rs.3.75 crores in 1917, the value rose as high as Rs.14.96 crores in 1924 and then declined to Rs.6.11 crores in 1933.⁵ This variation in value is due partly to the price deflation common to many countries before and after the war.

The production of coal is the most important mining industry. The first mine was opened at Raniganj in 1820, but it was not until 1854 when the East India Railways reached the coal-fields that the industry began to develop. From 6.03 million

¹ *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1908, Vol. III, pp. 56-57.

² *Indian Tea Statistics*, 1935, pp. 8-9.

³ *Indian Tea Statistics*, 1924, pp. 10 and 17; *Review of the Trade of India*, 1935-1936, pp. 89-90. The figures for export refer to financial years and to the sea-borne trade only for 1935.

⁴ *Statistics of British India*, 1922, Vol. I, p. 109; *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1938, Tables Nos. 176 and 180.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1933, Table No. 317; 1937, Table No. 318; the reference is to the whole of India.

tons in 1908, the production of coal rose, though not without fluctuations, to 22.68 million tons in 1930 in British India, showing more than a threefold increase in a generation ; in 1936 the figure stood at 20.58 million tons.¹ A great impediment to the growth of the coal industry in India is the location of the mines. The coalfields are located far inland in Bengal and Bihar and the transport of coal to industrial centres, such as Bombay and Karachi, is very costly. It has thus been possible for some foreign countries to compete successfully with Indian coal even in Indian markets, especially in the south and west of the country. These initial disadvantages were aggravated by high freight rates, lack of transport facilities and absence of uniformity in the quality of coal. Some action has been taken to improve the position of the industry in accordance with recommendations made by the Coal Committee of 1924.

The branch of organised industry which shows the greatest development in India is the spinning and weaving of cotton. Although the industry was first established in 1818,² it was only in the sixties that cotton mills were built in any number in different parts of the country. From 1878-1879 to 1935-1936, the number of mills rose from 56 to 304, while the number of looms and spindles rose from 12,600 and 1.4 million respectively to 164,000 and 18.04 million. It must be mentioned that there are also cotton mills in Indian States ; in 1935-1936, there were 62 mills with 26,000 looms and about 1.2 million spindles.³ These mills are not subject to the same labour legislation as in British India, and there exists some competition between cotton mills in British India and in the Indian States.

Although it has developed fairly steadily, the cotton mill industry is beset with several difficulties, both internal and external : the staple of Indian cotton is short, the rates of interest on capital are high, labour is inefficient, the method of management through managing agencies leads to conservatism, there is a lack of co-ordination among the mills situated in different parts of the country, and foreign competition is severe. India's greatest rival now is Japan ; and on the recommendation of the

¹ *Statistics of British India*, 1922, Vol. I, p. 90 ; *Indian Coal Statistics*, 1936, Table No. 4.

² *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1908, Vol. III, p. 197.

³ *Statistics of British India*, 1922, Vol. I, p. 53 ; *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1938, Table No. 213.

Cotton Textile Tariff Board, the Government of India passed in 1930 the Indian Textile Industry (Protection) Act imposing duties on cotton piece goods for three years. The Act has since then been amended and the protection policy continued. An agreement was arrived at in 1933 between Japan and India as to the amount of Japanese cotton goods which could be imported in exchange for India's raw cotton.

The next important textile industry is the manufacture of jute. The first jute mill was established at Serampore in 1854 and, a few years later, jute mills were set up around Calcutta. From 1879-1880 to 1935-1936, the number of mills rose from 22 to 104, and the number of looms and spindles increased from 4,946 and 70,840 to 63,700 and 1.27 million respectively.¹ This industry is practically the monopoly of Bengal.

The manufacture of iron and steel is an industry in which India has made considerable progress in recent years. Although attempts were made to introduce modern processes in iron and steel manufacture in earlier years, it was not until coal mining and railways had been developed that such attempts could be successful. The Bengal Iron and Steel Company was founded near the Raniganj coalfields in 1875 and reorganised as the Bengal Iron Company in 1919. The Tata Iron and Steel Company was organised in 1907 and began the production of iron in 1911 and that of steel in 1913. The location of the Tata Iron and Steel Company in the centre of the raw material area gave it an initial advantage and the war of 1914-1918 helped it to win a prominent place in Indian and other Asiatic markets. The production of pig-iron, steel ingots and finished steel increased from 384,000, 156,000 and 104,000 tons respectively in 1922-1923 to 1,541,000, 880,000 and 677,000 tons respectively in 1935-1936.²

In competition with foreign producers, the iron and steel industry in India suffers from various disadvantages such as the climate, lack of technical skill and insufficiency of capital. In spite of the advantages noted above the prosperity of the Tata Iron and Steel Company began to decline in 1921-1922, and on the recommendation of the Indian Tariff Board on the Steel Industry, the Government of India passed in 1924 the Steel

¹ *Statistics of British India, 1922, Vol. I, p. 76 ; Statistical Abstract for British India, 1938, Table No. 214.*

² *Review of the Trade of India, 1924-1925, p. 34 : 1935-1936, p. 36.*

Industry (Protection) Act granting protection for three years; since then this Act has several times been renewed and amended.

The most important factor in recent industrial development has been the change in the industrial policy of the Government of India from free trade to protection. During the war, Government realised the importance of developing a balanced industrial system in India and on the recommendations of the Industrial Commission of 1916-1918, of the Fiscal Commission of 1921 and of other similar bodies, a series of measures has been adopted, of which the most important are the following: (1) the creation of Departments of Industries by several Provincial Governments, which were given direct charge of industries by the Government of India Act of 1919, and the enactment of legislation enabling financial assistance to be given and loans to be granted to small industries; (2) the establishment of scientific and technical institutions and demonstration stations for education and advice; (3) the introduction of protection and bounties for the iron and steel, cotton piece goods, sugar, match and other industries; and (4) the adoption of the policy of reciprocity within the British Empire by different tariff Acts and also by the Ottawa Trade Agreement of 1932.¹

To sum up, organised industry in India has made steady progress in recent years. From 7,113 in 1911, when the first industrial census was taken, the number of industrial undertakings employing more than twenty persons rose to 11,034 in 1921, showing an increase of 33 per cent. in a decade. During the same period the number of undertakings working with mechanical power increased from 4,569 to 8,015 or by 75 per cent. Including the undertakings employing less than twenty persons, the total number of industrial establishments amounted to 15,606 in 1921, of which 51 per cent. worked with mechanical power.² Although no census was taken of large-scale industries in 1931,³ there is ample evidence to show that there has been a great increase in the number of such industries.

¹ *Indian Trade Journal*, 29 December 1932, pp. 930-933.

² *Census of India*, 1921, pp. 266-268.

³ The biennial reports on *Large Industrial Establishments in India*, published by the Government of India, (the last being in 1935), relate only to factories working under the Indian Factories Act and employing daily not less than 20 persons.

CHAPTER II

NATURE AND EXTENT OF INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT

An inevitable concomitant of the development of organised industry in India has been the gradual constitution of an industrial working class, increasingly dependent upon employment in plantations, factories, mines and transport for a livelihood.

1. — Classes of Wage Workers

Forms of employment for wages existed, of course, long before the rise of modern industry. In the Indian village, for example, other classes of people besides the peasants owned farmland which they often cultivated with hired labour. Part of this labour was supplied by a class of people who were more or less attached to the landlord by customary law and worked in exchange for free land for dwelling and cultivation; this custom still prevails in parts of the country, especially in the Indian States. Labour was also supplied by some of the small cultivators or peasants, who temporarily hired themselves out for stipulated remuneration, and this practice also still exists. In fact, these two classes of hired labourers still form the mass of agricultural wage workers in India.¹

On the other hand, there was practically no demand for industrial labour in the old Indian village where cottage industries were often family affairs and other handicrafts were carried on by hereditary artisans and craftsmen on a very small scale. Industrial wage-workers first appeared in the towns where arts and crafts were better developed and production often

¹ They were known until recently as farm servants and field workers, but the census of 1931 classified them under the heading of "agricultural labourers". The census of 1921 enumerated 18.3 million field labourers and 3.3 million farm servants.

surpassed the local needs ; but the number of such workers was very small owing to the limited scope of these handicrafts. Moreover, the direct relationship between the master craftsman or artisan and the wage workers, most of whom were relatives or members of the same caste, scarcely gave any occasion for social and economic distinctions between the employer and the employed.

There has always been a demand for casual labour, both in the village and the town, and this was supplied by those whose occupations were not sufficient to support them : the village menials, petty artisans and poor peasants. Public works in the village or small town were generally undertaken by voluntary co-operation, but the building of trunk roads, palaces, monuments and such other large public works was often done with the help of forced labour.

With the decline of handicrafts which followed the appearance on the market of factory products, some of the artisans and craftsmen fell back upon agriculture as a means of livelihood. However, the growth of population and the constant pressure on land, as well as increasing subdivision of the holdings, made even the livelihood of many cultivators very precarious, and these circumstances, together with the rising prices of commodities and the increasing standard of living, created a class of people who were ready to take employment outside the hereditary occupations. Moreover, there had always been a class of outcastes or untouchables in the village and the town who sought to escape from their degradation whenever there was an opportunity.

The demand for labour in organised industry first came from the Colonies in the thirties of the last century and considerable numbers of labourers began to emigrate under the indenture system. The origin of industrial labour or, more strictly speaking, of labour in organised industry, within the country may be traced to the middle of the last century, when the Public Works Department was established and elaborate schemes for the construction of roads, railways and public buildings were projected. The significance of these public works was twofold : first, they created new and permanent opportunities for industrial employment ; secondly, they introduced the system of payment in cash rather than in kind, the latter having been an almost universal system of payment in the country. Public works were soon followed by other branches of organised industry, such as

plantations, mines and factories, which began to be developed in different parts of the country in the sixties and continued to multiply in the second half of the nineteenth century, drawing workers from different parts of the country into industrial centres. Since the beginning of the present century and especially since the war, industrial activities have increased still farther and have created new demands for industrial labour.

Thus, as a result of increasing pressure on land on the one hand, and the demand for labour by rising industries on the other, there has come into existence in India a large class of persons who depend wholly or partly upon wage labour as a means of livelihood. The exact number of such labourers is difficult to ascertain owing to the lack of statistical data. Moreover, as pointed out by the Census Report of India for 1921, it is impossible to isolate as distinct classes all the labourers in India and to treat them separately for statistical enquiry.¹ A considerable number of persons who are connected with agriculture and handicrafts live on the borderland between independent work and wage work and may be returned as cultivators or artisans in a prosperous year and as labourers in a bad year.

The total number of agricultural labourers, which was given as 21.5 million in 1921, was shown by the census of 1931 to be over 31.5 million,² of whom 23 million were estimated by the Indian Franchise Committee in 1931 to be "landless", while the total number of non-agricultural labourers, as estimated by the Indian Franchise Committee, was 25 million.³ There are, therefore, about 56.5 million wage-labourers out of 154 million persons in all occupations in the whole of India, or, in other words, over 36 per cent. of the people in all occupations depend upon wage labour as a means of livelihood.

Of the 25 million non-agricultural labourers, 7 million are general labourers, leaving a total of some 18 million people who work for wages in some branch of industry. Exact statistics

¹ *Census of India, 1921*, p. 272.

² *Census of India, 1931: Abstract of Statistics*, p. 12.

³ *East India (Constitutional Reforms): Report of the Indian Franchise Committee* (London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1932, Cmd. 4086), Vol. I, pp. 91-92. It is not exactly clear whether this estimate applies to the whole of India or to British India only. Since the total number of persons employed in non-agricultural occupations amounts only to a little over 38 million in British India, this estimate could not have applied to British India alone.

exist, however, only in regard to workers in organised and regulated industry, which employs only a small percentage of the total number of industrial wage earners.

According to the census of 1921, the total number of workers in undertakings employing 20 persons or more was 2,608,122 (2,105,824 in 1911); including undertakings employing 10 persons or more, the total number of workers in 1921 amounted to 2,681,125.¹ In 1931 no general return was obtained from industrial undertakings employing labour,² but there was an increase of 30 per cent. in the daily average number of persons employed in several industries, and if this increase was general it may be calculated that the average daily number of persons employed in all branches of organised industry would amount to 3.5 million. The actual number of workers is, however, much larger than the average daily attendance, and both the census of 1931 and the Indian Franchise Committee of 1932 estimated that the total number of workers in organised industry would be about 5 million in 1931.³

By far the greater part of the workers in organised industry are males over 15 years of age. The total number of women shown by the census of 1931 to be gainfully employed was 48.8 million,⁴ or 31 per cent. of the total population gainfully employed. The number of women wage workers comprised in this total is only accurately known in the case of agriculture, being given as about 14.36 million by the census of 1931. As regards women wage workers in organised industry, the census of 1921 showed that 686,811 women, or about 26 per cent. of the total number of workers, were employed in undertakings employing ten or more persons; assuming that the number of women employed increased in the same proportion as the total number of wage earners, there would be something over a million women in organised industry in 1931. The number of children under 15 years of age employed in undertakings employing ten or more persons in 1921 was 225,172, or 8.4 per cent. of the total number of workers in organised industry. If the rate of increase were the same here also, the number in 1931 would be

¹ *Census of India, 1921*, pp. 266, 292-293.

² Cf. *Census of the United Provinces, 1931*, p. 419.

³ *Census of India, 1931*, p. 285; *Report of the Indian Franchise Committee, 1932*, p. 91.

⁴ Including working dependants.

about 400,000, but it seems probable that the proportion of children decreased during the decade 1921-1931.¹

It cannot yet be said that this body of workers in organised industry constitutes a permanent industrial labour force such as exists in European countries. In fact, most of the workers in organised industry are not yet permanently domiciled in the industrial centres in which they are employed, but are villagers who come to the centres of employment for varying periods and whose homes are still in their native villages. Nevertheless, a permanent class of workers who are solely dependent upon wages as a means of livelihood and are wholly detached from the land is rapidly being formed in most of the industrial centres, such as Bombay, Ahmedabad, Cawnpore, Jharia and Raniganj, and it would seem that this tendency will continue in India as in other developing industrial countries.²

The wage workers of India may then be roughly classified into agricultural workers, non-agricultural workers employed as general labourers and in a variety of small industries, in trade, etc., and workers in organised industries. The development of employment in each of the main branches of organised industry — plantations, factories, mines and communications — will be dealt with in the following sections.

2. — Plantations

Increasing numbers of workers have been employed in plantation industries since the middle of the last century, but no accurate statistics were available until 1911, when the first industrial census was taken. The number of workers on all kinds of plantation was 741,691 in 1911 and 1,003,456 in 1921,³ showing an increase of 35 per cent. in a decade. No return is available as to the actual number of wage workers in various classes of plantation industries⁴ in 1931, but the cultivation of special crops, as

¹ *Census of India*, 1921, p. 292; 1931, p. 258; *Report of the Indian Franchise Committee*, 1932, p. 91.

² "It might be said that a very large majority of the labour force in Ahmedabad is permanent, although workers without any connection with villages form only about 20 per cent. of the working-class population." Cf. *The Royal Commission on Labour in India: Memorandum from the Government of Bombay*, p. 7.

³ *Census of India*, 1911, p. 440; 1921, p. 285.

⁴ They include the cultivation of cinchona, coco-nuts, gunja (kind of

plantations are called, employed 1,907,126 persons¹ in all India, planters, managers, clerks and labourers being included in this total.

OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION

The most important plantation industries from the point of view of employment are tea, coffee, and rubber estates, which together employed, in 1935, a daily average of 1,039,637 persons, of whom 882,739² were in British India. The actual numbers of workers, however, are much larger than those indicated by the daily averages. Plantations are seasonal industries, and many more workers are employed during the busy season than during the slack season. Moreover, account must also be taken of the high rate of absenteeism and the migratory habits of the workers.

While there has been a general increase in the number of workers employed on plantations, there have been considerable fluctuations with the varying fortunes of these industries. Thus, for coffee plantations, the records show that in the whole of India the figures of workers employed were 82,000³ in 1903, 74,088 in 1923-1924 and 102,903 in 1935-1936. The following table gives the figures for recent years; of the total number of the workers in 1935-1936, 53,278 or more than one-half were in British India:

WORKERS ON COFFEE PLANTATIONS IN ALL INDIA¹

Year	Number of plantations ²	Garden labour (permanent)	Outside labour (permanent)	Outside labour (temporary)	Total
1928-1929 . .	3,357	44,744	19,094	31,027	94,865
1931-1932 . .	6,648	39,157	17,153	40,396	96,706
1932-1933 . .	6,781	43,126	21,210	36,838	101,174
1935-1936 . .	6,823	40,684	22,137	40,082	102,903

¹ *Indian Coffee Statistics* for the respective years. The figures for 1931-1932 are those which were revised in 1932-1933.

² Since 1931-1932, the small plantations of between 5 and 10 acres have been included in the numbers of coffee estates; they were 4,413 in 1931-1932, 3,116 in 1932-1933 and 3,122 in 1935-1936.

hemp), pan-vine, rubber, coffee, tea, market-gardening, and flower and fruit gardening.

¹ Compiled from the *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. I, Part II, p. 206.

² These figures have been arrived at by adding the average daily numbers employed on coffee plantations in 1935-1936 and on tea and rubber plantations in 1935.

³ *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1908, Vol. III, p. 63.

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Rubber plantations offer less employment than the coffee estates and the figures show great variations. In 1926 there were 48,383 workers; in 1928 the figure rose to 58,292 but in 1933 it had fallen to 14,128. The number rose again to 37,695 in 1935, and of this number 17,555 were in British India. It will be observed in the following table that there has been a large and constant increase in the number of plantations, a fact which is explained by the great development of small undertakings.

WORKERS ON RUBBER PLANTATIONS IN ALL INDIA¹

(Daily average numbers employed)

Year	Number of plantations	Garden labour (permanent)	Outside labour (permanent)	Outside labour (temporary)	Total
1926	1,171	31,858	10,716	5,809	48,383
1928	2,782	31,748	9,234	17,310	58,292
1933	4,637	8,524	2,472	3,132	14,128
1935	15,882	22,585	7,141	7,969	37,695

¹ Indian Rubber Statistics for the respective years.

By far the largest number of plantation workers are employed on tea gardens. In 1895, the earliest year for which records are available for all India, there was a daily average of 553,821 workers.¹ This figure rose to 973,358 in 1919, and declined to 811,540 in 1924. The highest figure in recent years was in 1929; the following years showed a decrease, but the position had been largely re-established by 1935. Of the total number of workers in 1935, 811,906 were in British India.

¹ "These figures are not, however, altogether reliable, as errors occur both in reporting the numbers employed and reducing the total number of attendants to a daily average. In Southern India, work is also done by contract, in which case no record of labour is available." — *Production of Tea in India*, 1904, p. 3.

WORKERS ON TEA PLANTATIONS IN ALL INDIA ¹

(Daily average numbers employed)

Year	Number of plantations	Garden labour (permanent)	Outside labour (permanent)	Outside labour (temporary)	Total
1924	4,300	690,212	51,022	70,306	811,540
1929	4,714	778,937	78,514	73,021	930,472
1932	4,848	753,430	45,251	61,032	859,713
1933	4,974	763,728	44,135	56,640	864,503
1935	5,134	801,430	43,598	54,011	899,039

¹ Compiled from *Note on the Production of Tea in India*, 1912, and also from *India Tea Statistics* for the respective years.

It will be seen from the above tables that tea gardens employ a proportionately larger permanent labour force than the other plantation industries. The reason for the higher proportion of permanent workers on tea gardens is the fact that the labour is recruited from distant provinces, and it is in the interest both of employers and workers that the employment should be as permanent as possible. A large number of tea-garden workers have indeed settled on or near tea gardens.

An important feature of plantation industries is that, in proportion to men, they employ more women than any other form of organised industry. Out of 741,697 persons in 1911 and 1,003,456 persons in 1921, the numbers of women employed on all kinds of plantations were 350,064 and 474,626 respectively, showing a proportion of 47 per cent. in both cases. Exact data on the proportion of women workers in all classes of plantations for 1931 are not available, but out of 1,907,126 persons employed as planters, managers, clerks and labourers in all India in 1931, 693,299 or over 36 per cent. were women. ¹

The reasons for this proportionately larger employment of women workers on plantations as compared with other organised industries are, in the first place, that plantation work is only a special kind of agricultural work and is therefore more familiar to Indian women, the vast majority of whom live in rural dis-

¹ *Census of India*, 1921, p. 285 ; 1931, Vol. I, Part II, p. 206.

tracts; secondly, that facilities have been given to male workers to settle on, or in the vicinity of, the plantations, and to take their wives and families with them; and finally, that under the old system of labour contracts, based on the principle of utilising every able-bodied person in the family for labour and of fixing the wage rates accordingly, many women had to seek employment in order to balance the family budget, and although the contract system has been abolished, the wage system and the need for supplementary earnings still remain.

PROVINCIAL DISTRIBUTION

Plantations in India are mainly located in two distinct and widely separate areas, in the North and the South.

The principal plantation areas in the South are situated on the summits and slopes of the Western Ghats, the more important regions in British India being Coorg and the Madras Presidency, the latter comprising the Nilgiris, Malabar, the Anamalais and the Shevaroye. In Coorg the most important crop is coffee, though tea and rubber are also grown, while all the three important plantation crops are grown in the Nilgiris and in the Malabar district. The Anamalais grow mostly tea and the Shevaroyes, which are small detached ranges in the Salem district, mostly coffee.¹

The plantations in the North are principally located in Assam and Bengal. In Assam the plantations are distributed in the Brahmaputra or the Assam Valley in the North and the Surma Valley in the South. The planting areas in Bengal comprise Darjeeling, the Terai and the Dooars in the North and Tripura in the South-East. In Darjeeling the tea gardens occupy slopes from 6,000 feet downwards; the Terai is level country at the base of and surrounded by high mountains and is only about 300 feet above the sea level; the Dooars is a submontane country, south of Bhutan and 22 miles in width, between the Tista and Sankosh rivers.² With the exception of cinchona, which is grown by the Government in the district of Darjeeling, the only plantation crop in Bengal is tea. A few small plantations are also to be found in the Punjab, the United Provinces and Bihar and Orissa.

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 354-355.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 356-357.

The most important areas for the coffee industry are the Madras Presidency and Coorg in British India and the States of Mysore, Travancore and Cochin; in 1935-1936, the number of workers was 31,655 in the Madras Presidency, 21,623 in Coorg, and 48,117 in Mysore.¹ Rubber plantations are mostly to be found in Burma and Travancore, which employed 15,006 and 18,515 workers respectively in 1935.² As regards tea gardens, the Northern areas are most important; of the total number of workers employed in 1935, about three-fifths were in Assam and over one-fifth in Bengal, i.e. over four-fifths of the workers were in these two provinces alone, Madras and Travancore together having less than one-sixth of the total workers. The table shows the distribution by Provinces and States of workers in the tea industry.

DISTRIBUTION BY PROVINCE OR STATE OF TEA-GARDEN
WORKERS IN 1935¹

Province or State	Tea gardens	Daily average number of workers employed			
		Garden labour (permanent)	Outside labour (permanent)	Outside labour (temporary)	Total
Assam	1,067	463,495	26,312	29,814	519,621
Bengal	352	194,889	4,105	6,434	205,428
Travancore.	298	69,021	2,852	1,239	73,112
Madras	808	60,871	3,502	5,336	69,709
Punjab	2,560	966	2,810	6,934	10,710
Tripura (Bengal).	49	5,688	1,181	1,751	8,620
United Provinces	42	1,863	504	1,129	3,496
Mysore	14	818	1,900	690	3,408
Bihar and Orissa	26	1,525	432	636	2,593
Cochin	7	1,945	—	48	1,993
Coorg	1	349	—	—	349
Total.	5,134	801,430	43,598	54,011	899,039

¹ Compiled from *Indian Tea Statistics*, 1935, pp. 11 and 20.

¹ Compiled from *Indian Coffee Statistics*, 1935-1936, p. 5.

² Compiled from *Indian Rubber Statistics*, 1935, p. 7.

ASSAM TEA-GARDEN WORKERS

Assam not only employs the largest number of tea-garden workers, it is also one of the oldest centres of the plantation industry in India. In fact, plantation legislation in India developed chiefly in connection with the recruitment and employment of Assam tea-garden labourers. The increase in the number of labourers employed on Assam tea gardens is therefore of particular interest in connection with the study of labour conditions.

The first available records on labour in Assam gardens are for 1877, when there were 157,219 persons living on plantations; in 1935-1936, this figure had risen to 1,139,396. The largest increase in the number of persons living on Assam tea gardens took place in 1919-1920; this was partly due to the industrial boom at the end of the war and partly to the sudden increase in the number of immigrants, as a result of the previous year's famine in a number of recruiting districts. The number subsequently declined, but reached a higher level in 1935-1936.

LABOUR POPULATION LIVING ON ASSAM TEA GARDENS
IN SPECIFIED YEARS¹

Year ²	Adults	Children ^c	Total
1877	110,675	46,544	157,219
1900	410,075	252,376	662,451
1919-1920	628,631	480,733	1,110,364
1935-1936	618,043	521,353	1,139,396

¹ Average annual strength. Compiled from *Reports on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam* and *Annual Report on the Working of the Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act* (XXII of 1932).

² The years chosen are those when the number of workers on the gardens was large.

The number of workers actually employed on the tea gardens is, of course, not the same as those living on them. In 1935-1936 for instance, the numbers of workers registered on the labour books and the daily average working strength¹ were 50 and 37 per cent. respectively of the total labour force living on the gardens. The corresponding percentages for adults and children were respectively about 81 and 60, and 15 and 10.5, as shown below. It is thus seen that only a little over half of the labour population on tea gardens were actual workers.

¹ Average of two months only.

LABOURERS WORKING ON ASSAM TEA GARDENS, 1935-1936¹

Classes of workers	Number living on tea gardens (average annual strength)	Number registered on labour books ²		Daily average working strength	
		Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Adults. . .	618,043	498,835	80.7	308,663	59.6
Children . .	521,353	78,418	15.0	54,928	10.5
Total . .	1,139,396	577,253	50.6	423,591	37.1

¹ Compiled from *Annual Report on the Working of the Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act, 1935-1936*.

² Average of two months only.

There has been a gradual decline in the number of children (i.e. persons under 16 years of age) employed on tea gardens as compared with those living on them. From 1928-1929 to 1935-1936, the number of children employed on the gardens declined from 20.9 per cent. of the total number of children living on the gardens to 15 per cent. and the daily average working strength fell from 14.4 to 10.5 per cent. It is noteworthy that this decline followed the visit to Assam in 1929-1930 of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, which recommended a minimum age of 10 years for employment on the tea gardens.

EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN ON ASSAM TEA GARDENS¹

Year	Total number of children on gardens ²	Children registered in labour books ³		Daily average working strength	
		Number	Per cent. of total	Number	Per cent. of total
1928-1929 . . .	446,150	93,378	20.9	64,608	14.4
1929-1930 . . .	457,917	89,671	19.5	62,493	13.6
1930-1931 . . .	452,649	84,394	18.6	56,158	12.4
1931-1932 . . .	448,999	79,680	17.7	52,565	11.7
1932-1933 . . .	461,279	77,543	16.7	50,135	10.8
1933-1934 . . .	491,864	73,430	14.9	49,723	10.1
1934-1935 . . .	509,979	78,383	15.3	47,996	9.4
1935-1936 . . .	521,353	78,418	15.0	54,928	10.5

¹ Compiled from *Report on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam and Annual Report on the Working of the Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act (XXII of 1932)* for the respective years.

² Average annual strength.

³ Average of two months only.

By far the largest number of workers are located in the Assam Valley as is shown by the following table :

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF LABOUR POPULATION
ON ASSAM TEA GARDENS, 1935-1936 ¹

	Assam Valley		Surma Valley		Total	
	Number on the books	Average daily number	Number on the books	Average daily number	Number on the books	Average daily number
Men	199,301	151,977	71,134	56,228	270,435	208,205
Women	161,137	114,643	67,262	45,815	228,400	160,458
Children	51,174	36,793	27,244	18,135	78,418	54,928
Total	411,612	303,413	165,640	120,178	577,253	423,591

¹ Compiled from *Annual Report on the Working of the Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act* (XXII of 1932), 1935-1936.

3. — Factories

The branch of organised industry which employs the largest number of wage workers in India is the factory industry. Large industrial enterprises came into existence about the middle of the last century, and in 1881, when the first Indian Factories Act was passed, they were brought under legislative control.

Factories in India may be divided into three categories : (1) those undertakings which do not use machinery or mechanical power but employ a substantial number of workers; (2) those undertakings which use machinery and mechanical power but employ less than 20 persons; and (3) those undertakings which use machinery and mechanical power and employ 20 persons or more. It is only the last class of undertakings which generally come under the Factories Act and are legally termed " factories ", although, as will be explained below, a few undertakings of the first two classes have also been brought under section 5 (1) of the Act.

Factories include a number of undertakings which are closely connected with other industries, such as plantations and transport. While the production of the tea leaf is a plantation industry, the curing of the leaf into a finished product is a distinct process often involving the use of machinery and mechanical

power and comes under the Factories Act. In the same way, most of the workshops connected with the railways and other transport industries are also worked under the Factories Act.

The first systematic records of workers in all classes of factories working under the Indian Factories Act were made in 1892, when there were 656 factories and 316,816 factory workers; by 1936 these figures had risen to 9,323 and 1,652,147 respectively. The following table shows the numbers of factories and of men, women and children employed in selected years; the 1936 figures for men and women also include 24,025 male and 5,669 female adolescents respectively.

DAILY AVERAGE NUMBER OF WORKERS EMPLOYED IN FACTORIES
IN SPECIFIED YEARS¹

Year	Factories ²	Men	Women	Children	Total
1892	656	251,336	43,592	18,888	316,816
1912	2,710	685,822	130,025	53,796	869,643
1923	5,985	1,113,508	221,045	74,620	1,409,173
1933	8,452	1,167,284	216,837	19,091	1,403,212
1934	8,658	1,228,009	220,860	18,362	1,487,231
1935	8,831	1,360,131	235,344	15,457	1,610,932
1936	9,323	1,400,210	239,375	12,062	1,652,147

¹ *Bulletins of Indian Industries and Labour: Indian Factory Law Administration, 1921, pp. 46 and 47; Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act, 1923, 1933-1936.*

² Figures represent the numbers of factories actually working during the year and not those registered under the Act.

The figures for these various years are not, however, strictly comparable, the increase in the number of factory workers being due to the extension of the scope of the Indian Factories Act to smaller undertakings, as well as to the increase in the number of larger factories or of persons employed therein. In 1892, for instance, factories included only those undertakings which worked with mechanical power and employed 50 persons or more. In 1936 they included undertakings employing 20 persons or more and using mechanical power, also 307 notified factories, that is, factories which employed 10 persons or more and worked with or without mechanical power, the latter being brought under the Factories Act by provincial Governments under section 5 (1) of the Indian Factories Act.

Moreover, based as they are on the daily average attendance, the figures do not represent the actual number of workers

employed in factories during a year, as, owing to irregularities of attendance, high labour turnover and the constant movements of the workers from the town to the village and vice versa, the daily attendance figure is much below the total labour force. Most factories find it necessary to maintain reserves of labour to replace absentee workers, and as in the days of long hours some classes of workers, e.g. weavers in cotton mills, were relieved by extra hands employed for the purpose, so to-day relief workers are employed in many factories, especially those which are seasonal.

Again, the figures for women are not altogether comparable, as girls between the ages of 12 and 15 years, who were included among women before 1922, have since been regarded as children.

The number of children employed in factories increased about four times from 1892 to 1923, but thereafter it began to decline, the figure for 1936 being less than that of 1892. The outstanding feature of the changes in the composition of the industrial working class in India in recent years is, indeed, the decline in the number of children employed in factories. This decline has been both relative to the total number of workers employed since 1912, and also absolute in respect of the number of children employed since 1923. The extent of the decrease since 1923 is shown below.

DECREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN EMPLOYED IN
FACORIES SINCE 1923¹

Year	Children employed	Annual decrease
1923.	74,620	—
1924.	72,531	2,089
1925.	68,725	3,806
1926.	60,094	8,631
1927.	57,562	2,532
1928.	50,911	6,651
1929.	46,843	4,068
1930.	37,972	8,871
1931.	26,932	11,040
1932.	21,783	5,149
1933.	19,091	2,692
1934.	18,362	729
1935.	15,457	2,905
1936.	12,062	3,395
Total decrease from 1923 to 1936. .	—	62,558

¹ Compiled from *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act* for respective years.

This decline in the number of children employed in factories is to be ascribed partly to the stricter provisions of the law relating to the employment of children and partly to the change in the policy of some employers who have substituted adult workers for children on economic grounds.

Most of the children employed in Indian factories are boys. Of the 12,062 children employed in 1936, for instance, 9,338 were boys, the proportion of boys to girls being 3.4 to 1. The influence of the special Indian customs is no doubt partly responsible for the comparatively small number of girls employed in factories. As a result of the custom of early marriage and of the universality of marriage, a considerable number of girls marry before the minimum age for admission to employment; and the *purdah* system, the caste system and the joint family system also tend to prevent both adult women and grown-up girls from undertaking occupations outside the household.

OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION

The total number of factories registered under the Indian Factories Act in 1936 was 10,226, of which 9,323, including 307 notified under section 5 (1) of the Act, were working during the year. 368 factories employing 122,517 workers¹ were owned by Government and local bodies (municipalities and Port Trusts) — these factories are known as Government and Local Fund factories — while the remainder were privately owned; all such undertakings, public and private, are subject to the Indian Factories Act.

It is customary to divide Indian factories into two categories: (1) those which are non-seasonal or perennial, and (2) those which are seasonal, i.e. which work only for a season or less than 180 days in the year. The importance of this classification becomes evident from the fact that not only the nature of the work, the rates of wages, and housing accommodation, but also working conditions are different in these two classes of factories; as will be seen below, the Indian Factories Act of 1934 makes a distinction between the two classes of factories in respect of hours of work and other matters.

Although the distinction between perennial and seasonal

¹ *Statistics of Factories Subject to Indian Factories Act, 1936.*

factories has long been current, it is only since 1931, as a result of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Labour in India,¹ that separate data for the two classes of factories have become available. This information shows a considerable variation in the composition of the labour force in seasonal and perennial factories. Thus, seasonal factories, being located in rural districts, employ women, adolescents and children to a larger extent than perennial factories. The following table shows the distribution between perennial and seasonal factories :

PROPORTION OF WORKERS EMPLOYED IN PERENNIAL AND
SEASONAL FACTORIES IN 1936¹

Category of workers	Total workers in all factories	Workers in perennial factories		Workers in seasonal factories	
		Number	Per cent. of total	Number	Per cent. of total
Men	1,376,185	1,161,338	84.4	214,847	15.6
Women	234,206	152,921	65.3	81,285	34.7
Adolescents	29,694	20,647	69.8	9,047	30.2
Children	12,062	8,814	73.6	3,248	26.4
Total	1,652,147	1,343,720	81.3	308,427	18.7

¹ Compiled from *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act, 1936*, p. 30.

Perennial Factories

The most important classes of non-seasonal or perennial factories are textile mills and engineering and metal works; in 1936 they employed respectively 55 and 19 per cent. of the total number of workers employed in all perennial factories.

¹ The Commission classified factories under three headings : (1) perennial, (2) partially seasonal, and (3) predominantly seasonal ; cf. *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 75-76.

CHIEF CLASSES OF PERENNIAL FACTORY
WORKERS IN 1936¹

Class	Factories	Workers	
		Number	Per cent. of total
Textile mills ²	657	737,727	54.9
Engineering and metal works ³	1,067	253,494	19.0
Others.	3,857	352,499	26.1
Total. . .	5,581	1,343,720	100.0

¹ Compiled from *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act, 1936*.

² Including four cotton mills and three woollen mills employing 1,755 and 1,134 workers respectively and owned by Government and local bodies.

³ Including 36 electrical engineering works, 48 general engineering works, and 75 railway workshops, employing 3,456, 7,069 and 57,426 workers respectively, and belonging to Government and local bodies.

Of the textile factories, the most important are cotton and jute mills, which employed respectively 38,153 and 27,494 workers as early as 1879-1880,¹ and 427,920 and 289,136 workers in 1936. These industries employ considerable numbers of women, adolescents and children; in 1936, for instance, 99,710 women or 42.6 per cent. of the total number of women employed in factories, 11,595 adolescents or 38.3 per cent., and 4,825 children or 40 per cent. were found in cotton and jute mills. The percentage is much the same for men, women, adolescents and children together. Moreover, it is these industries which afford the greatest amount of permanent employment and which have consequently led to the formation of a settled urban working class. It is therefore in connection with these industries that some of the most urgent labour problems, such as those relating to housing and sanitation, arise.

The second large class of perennial factories is engineering and metal works, of which the most important are the railway and general engineering workshops, employing 106,326 and 42,226 workers respectively. Mineral and metal works are also becoming increasingly important and employed 53,929 workers in 1936.

Other perennial factories which employ considerable num-

¹ *Statistics of British India, 1922, Vol. I, pp. 53 and 73.*

bers of workers are those connected with food and drink and tobacco, chemicals and dyes, and paper and printing, which employed respectively 114,394, 53,352 and 35,742 workers in 1936; the most important single industry is rice-milling, which alone employed 79,887 workers.

Seasonal Factories

The general characteristics of seasonal factories, as established by the Royal Commission on Labour,¹ are (1) smallness in size, (2) distribution over wide areas and in regions producing particular crops, (3) recruitment of labour from the agriculturists, most of whom live in their own houses while working in the factories, (4) a rather larger proportion of women among the workers, and (5) lack of skill, low rates of wages and absence of any trade unionism among the workers.

The seasonal factories which employ most workers are cotton ginning and baling undertakings. The following table gives the figures for these undertakings and for tea factories, sugar factories and jute presses :

SEASONAL FACTORY WORKERS IN 1936¹

Class	Factories	Workers
Cotton ginning and baling.	2,036	140,423
Tea factories.	1,025	63,460
Sugar factories.	186	73,647
Jute presses.	76	16,490
Others.	419	14,407
Total.	3,742	308,427

¹ Compiled from *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act, 1936*.

Non-regulated Factories

Although no statistics of employment are available in respect of them and they are almost entirely outside the scope of Indian factories legislation, some reference must be made to the large

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 76.

number of small undertakings existing in India which are known as "non-regulated factories". These factories are of two kinds: those which use power machinery but employ fewer than 20 persons and thus remain outside the jurisdiction of the Indian Factories Act — it has been estimated that the number of such undertakings is not less than 2,000; those undertakings which do not use power machinery but employ in some cases as many as 50 persons or more — the exact number of these undertakings is not known, but those which employ 50 persons or more have been estimated to be about 1,000.¹

The most important of these undertakings are mica factories, wool-cleaning factories, shellac factories, *bidi* (indigenous cigarette) factories, carpet factories and tanneries. One of the 127 mica factories and 15 of 149 shellac factories are regulated by the Indian Factories Act.² The indigenous cigarette industry has grown very rapidly in recent years and *bidi* factories are found in almost all large cities; from fewer than 48,000 in 1921, the number of persons employed in this industry increased to nearly 148,000 in 1931. All these industries employ a relatively large proportion of women and children. It is estimated, for instance, that as many as one-tenth of the total number of workers in shellac factories, and one-third in mica factories, are children. Although the exact number of children in *bidi* factories is not known, "it is sufficiently large in certain areas to constitute an evil which demands immediate remedy".³ *Bidi* making is in fact a "sweated" industry employing *purdah* women and girls in their homes as well as young boys in small workshops.³

PROVINCIAL DISTRIBUTION

The question of the provincial distribution of the factory industries employing the largest number of workers is a point of some importance as Indian factory legislation, although it is enacted by the central Indian Legislature, is administered by Provincial Governments. Moreover, the nature of the labour problems, particularly in connection with the employment of

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 93 and 100.

² *Census of India*, 1931, p. 286; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 94-98.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 214.

women and children, differs somewhat from province to province.

The distribution of factories in 1936 in the several provinces, including other local administrations, is given in the table below. It will be seen that the principal provinces of employment are Bengal, Bombay and Madras. The table also shows the numbers of women, adolescents and children employed in different provinces, the largest numbers of women being employed in Bombay, Bengal and Madras, while the proportion of adolescents employed is largest in Bengal, and of children in Madras.

The premier province in the development of the factory system is Bengal, where the jute industry employs about nine-tenths of the total number of workers employed in jute mills in India and over half the workers in all classes of factories in the province. Bengal is followed by Bombay, where the most important industry is the spinning and weaving of cotton; the cotton mills of the Presidency employ over two-thirds of the workers in the cotton mill industry of the whole country as well as in all classes of factories in the Province. As far as the other provinces are concerned, the spinning and weaving of cotton is the leading industry in Madras and the United Provinces, the manufacture of iron and steel in Bihar and Orissa, rice mills in Burma and tea factories in Assam.

The most important centre of the factory industry in India is Calcutta and its immediate vicinity. Large river systems, rich alluvial soils, a tropical climate and a dense population have given Bengal a great advantage in the production of jute, a fibre crop of great commercial importance. Most of the jute produced in Bengal is manufactured around Calcutta; in the Hooghly Basin, for about 60 miles up and down stream from Calcutta, there were, in 1936, 943 jute and other mills employing 438,022 workers.¹ Moreover, Calcutta is the commercial and financial centre of the coal and tea industries.

The second most important industrial centre in India is the city and island of Bombay. From the middle of the nineteenth century the cotton industry developed mainly in the city of Bombay, the proximity of raw material and the facilities for transporting machinery from abroad and exporting manufactured goods

¹ *Annual Report on the Administration of the Indian Factories Act in Bengal, 1936*, Statements I and III, including Calcutta, Howrah, the 24 Parganas, and Hooghly.

DISTRIBUTION BY PROVINCE OF FACTORY WORKERS, 1936¹
(Average daily number of workers employed)

Province	Number of factories	Number of workers				
		Men	Women	Adolescents	Children	Total
Madars	1,584	113,844	44,113	7,584	5,257	170,800
Bombay	1,611	324,027	62,652	4,170	922	391,771
Sind	282	20,078	4,552	498	161	25,289
Bengal	1,667	400,742	59,271	9,360	1,862	531,235
United Provinces.	527	140,209	5,611	1,288	364	147,502
Punjab	747	53,399	8,155	1,416	992	63,962
Burma	985	76,821	11,447	867	95	89,230
Bihar	24	80,571	5,565	332	208	86,676
Orissa	64	2,411	918	5	12	3,346
Central Provinces and Berar . . .	718	42,492	20,294	245	155	63,186
Assam	710	32,068	9,583	3,815	1,603	47,069
North-West Frontier Province .	27	1,061	16	72	—	1,149
Baluchistan . .	10	1,596	—	—	54	1,750
Ajmer-Merwara .	40	12,455	1,124	4	198	13,781
Delhi	60	13,114	343	33	153	13,643
Bangalore and Coorg	17	1,197	530	5	26	1,758
Total	9,323	1,376,185	234,206	29,694	12,062	1,652,147

¹ Compiled from *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act, 1936*.

to foreign countries giving Bombay an advantage over other cities. In 1936 the city and island had 476 factories and 177,323 workers.¹ In recent years, however, large numbers of factories have been built in other cities, both in the Presidency itself as well as in the cotton-producing districts of Northern, Central and Southern India. Of these new centres of the cotton industry, the largest is Ahmedabad, now the third industrial city of India. In 1936 there were 247 mills in Ahmedabad and 102,753 workers were employed, almost all in cotton spinning and weaving mills.² Other large industrial centres are Cawnpore, Rangoon, Madras, Jamshedpur, Sholapur and Nagpur.³

¹ *Annual Factory Report of the Presidency of Bombay, 1936*.

² *Ibid.*

³ In 1936 the number of factory workers was 51,892 in Cawnpore, 28,737 in Jamshedpur, 26,658 in Rangoon, 23,492 in Madras, 20,803 in Sholapur and 14,275 in Nagpur.

4. — Mines

The Indian mining industry provided whole or part-time employment for 347,349 persons in 1921 and 404,262 persons in 1931. Of the latter figure, 309,454 were in British India, including 235,694 men and 73,760 women, of whom 37,861 men and 8,630 women were engaged in mining only as a subsidiary occupation.¹

Statistics of wage-workers in mines covered by the Indian Mines Act are available since 1901, when the first Indian Mines Act was passed and most of the mines in British India brought within its scope. It did not apply, however, to mines and quarries less than 20 feet deep, nor to those located in Indian States.² A new Mines Act was passed in 1923 and amended in 1935 extending its application to all excavations where minerals are obtained or searched for, irrespective of their depth, although most small and shallow excavations have been exempted under powers conferred by the Act. The following paragraphs refer, therefore, to the workers employed in all mines subject to the Mines Act in British India.

The number of workers employed in mines covered by the Mines Act in selected years is shown in the following table :

NUMBER OF MINING WORKERS IN SPECIFIED YEARS¹

Year ²	Mines subject to Mining Act	Workers			
		Under- ground	Open workings ³	Surface	Total
1901	542	70,129	—	34,531	104,660
1924	1,804	167,719	—	90,498	258,217
1926	1,897	118,232	71,139	70,742	260,113
1933	1,424	112,355	41,587	52,565	206,507
1936	1,973	130,724	69,193	69,676	269,593

¹ Compiled from the *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India* for the respective years.

² The years chosen to indicate the number of workers are those when a new or amended Act came into force or a change was made in the classification of workers, except the year 1936.

³ This distinction was first made in 1926.

¹ Compiled from *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. I, Part II, p. 200 ; 1931, Vol. I, Part II, p. 206.

² The extent of mining employment in Indian States in earlier days is indicated by the fact that, in 1902, 27,173 workers were employed in gold mines, 9,397 in coal mines, and 2,042 in iron mines. Cf. *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1902, p. 5.

The figures in this table show a considerable increase in the numbers of mines and of workers employed since the beginning of the century, but also that there was a marked decline between 1926 and 1933. The increase was particularly large during the war and the post-war boom. The impetus given during the war to mining industries resulted in an increase in the number of mines and of workers from 1,426 and 181,260 in 1913 to 1,627 and 237,738 respectively in 1918. This increased activity in mining continued for several years and the number of mines rose to 2,011 in 1925, and that of workers to 269,701 in 1929. The economic depression brought a decline, the number of mines falling to 1,424 or by 29 per cent., and the number of workers to 206,507 or by 23 per cent. in 1933.¹ The proportionally larger decline in the number of mines as compared with that of the workers was due to the closing down of the smaller and more unprofitable mines. By 1936, however, the numbers of mines and of workers had again reached a high level.

As in the case of factory workers, the number of workers employed in mines is much larger than that indicated by the "average daily attendance", which is obtained by dividing the total number of individual attendances by the number of working days in each year.² Irregularity of attendance is especially marked in the mining industries, and the mines usually work only four or five days in the week.

The numbers of men, women and children employed in mines are given in the table on page 52. It will be seen that two-thirds of all the workers were men in 1901, and, although this proportion decreased somewhat in 1924, it rose to above four-fifths in 1936. The elimination of the employment of young children and the decrease in the employment of women is the most striking feature of the labour situation in the mining industry. There had been a not inconsiderable proportion of women and children in the mining labour force. It was, in fact, the employment of women and children that led to the demand for the regulation of mining labour by legislation. Now, however, the employment of children under 15 years of age in mines is prohibited, and the prohibition of the employment of women underground has also

¹ Cf. *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India for the respective years.*

² *Indian Coal Statistics, 1936, p. 6.*

AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION OF WORKERS IN MINES
IN SPECIFIED YEARS¹

Year	Men		Women		Children ²		Total
	Number	Per cent. of total	Number	Per cent. of total	Number	Per cent. of total	
1901	69,025	65.9	30,488	29.2	5,147	4.9	104,660
1924	164,402	63.7	87,434	33.8	6,381	2.5	258,217
1926	181,616	69.8	78,497	30.2	—	—	260,113
1933	171,038	82.8	35,469	17.2	—	—	206,507
1936	226,958	84.2	42,635	15.8	—	—	269,593

¹ Compiled from the *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India* for the years indicated.

² Under 12 years of age: Cf. *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1924, p. 2.

become completely effective. These reforms have mainly been brought about by the recognition that mining work, especially underground, is particularly hard and strenuous, and, in the case of women and children, injurious to health, safety and morals; the enactment of legislation was also influenced, as will be described in Chapter III, by the work of the International Labour Conference.

The decline in the employment of women in the mining industry has been specially marked since 1929. In 1901 the number of women in all classes of mines was 30,488, or 29.2 per cent. of all the workers, and this figure rose as high as 91,949, or 36 per cent. of the total, in 1921. Thereafter, there was some reduction in the employment of women, the figure for 1929 being 70,656. After 1929, however, the decrease was rapid and in 1933 only 35,469 women were employed in mining, a fall of about 50 per cent. in the course of five years. Since then there has been a small absolute increase, but the proportion of women to men was only 15.8 per cent. in 1936.

A considerable proportion of the employment of women in mining was formerly underground. In 1924, for instance, 60,375 women, or 69 per cent. of all women mining workers, worked underground. In 1926 when, as was shown above, a distinction was first made between work in open workings and underground work, the numbers of women in open workings and underground were respectively 27,833 and 31,889, that is, 35 per cent. and 40 per cent. of all women mining workers respectively.

After 1929, however, when the regulations for the gradual elimination of women from underground employment began to operate, the proportion of women employed underground to the total number of women mining workers fell to 5.59 per cent. in 1936. Since October 1937, women may no longer be employed underground. The following table shows the progressive decrease since 1928.

DECREASE IN NUMBER OF WOMEN EMPLOYED
UNDERGROUND IN MINES SINCE 1928¹

Year	Total underground labour force	Women employed underground	
		Number	Per cent. of total
1928	117,940	31,785	26.96
1929	116,945	24,089	20.58
1930	120,333	18,684	15.56
1931	115,726	16,841	14.55
1932	110,907	14,711	13.26
1933	112,355	12,799	11.39
1934	120,216	11,193	9.31
1935	129,381	9,551	7.38
1936	130,724	7,301	5.59

¹ Compiled from *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India* for the respective years.

As already stated, Indian legislation now prohibits the employment of children entirely in mines. In 1921 the number of children under 12 years of age still employed in mines was 8,548 or 3.4 per cent. of the total mining workers. The Indian Mines Act, 1923, prohibited the employment of children under 13 years of age; this Act came into force on 1 April 1924 and, as far as the employment of children is concerned, became completely effective in 1926. A further step has recently been taken by the raising of the minimum age for the employment of children in mines to 15 years by the Indian Mines (Amendment) Act of 1935.

OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION

The following table shows the numbers of mines in the various classes and of the workers employed in 1936 :¹

¹ Compiled from the *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1933, pp. 3-4.

WORKERS IN DIFFERENT CLASSES OF
MINES IN 1936¹

Mineral	Number of mines	Average daily number of workers
Coal	594	162,917
Stone.	104	10,634
Mica	699	25,096
Tin-ore	387	19,543
Limestone	47	7,583
Iron ore.	7	13,017
Lead ore	1	3,698
Manganese ore	63	17,315
Others	71	9,790
Total.	1,973	269,593

¹ Compiled from *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India, 1936*.

In addition to the coal mines in British India which are mentioned in the above table, there are a number of coal mines in Indian States which employed 18,694 persons in 1936,¹ but, as these mines are not subject to the Indian Mines Act, they do not come within the scope of this report. In British India, coal mining employed 95,309 persons in 1901, the first year for which statistics are available, and by 1924 the employment figure had risen to 187,088; in 1936, however, as shown above, the number had fallen to 162,917. The number of women employed also increased from 27,955 in 1901 to 63,610 in 1924, but after that year it fell rapidly to 21,374 in 1936, mainly as a result of the policy of suppressing the underground employment of women.²

The extent to which underground employment of women still existed in 1936 is as follows: In all, 7,269 women were employed underground in coal mines, 2,755 in Bengal, 3,856 in Bihar, and 658 in the Central Provinces. According to the Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines for 1936, the number of women employed underground was well below the permissible percentage on 1 July 1936.³

Of the other classes of mines, the most important commercially are those of manganese ore. Most of these mines, which are nearly all open workings, are in the Central Provinces, Bihar,

¹ *Indian Coal Statistics, 1936*, p. 55.

² *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India* for the respective years.

³ *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India, 1936*, pp. 2 and 5.

Bombay and Madras. The average daily number of workers, which was 4,230 in 1901, had increased in 1936 to 17,315, of whom 7,741 were women.¹

Mica mines are mostly small units and are situated in rural surroundings, the majority being in Bihar and Madras. In Bihar, the mines are generally shafts, none of which are very deep, and the labour is supplied by part-time agricultural workers; in Madras, mica mines are usually open workings employing casual labour. The number of workers varies from year to year: it was, for instance, 9,219 in 1901, 17,841 in 1926, and 25,096 in 1936.²

The only important lead mine is the Bawdwin mine in the Northern Shan States in Burma, which employed 3,698 workers in 1936, of whom 3,187 were employed underground; no women workers are employed. The quarrying of stone is widely distributed both in India proper and in Burma; of the 10,634 workers employed in 1936, 1,826 were women. Limestone is quarried mostly in the Punjab, the Central Provinces, Bihar, and Sind, and employed 7,583 workers, including 2,993 women, in 1936. The iron mines are also open workings, and, except one mine in Burma, they are all located in the Singbhum district of Bihar; in 1927 these mines employed 9,732 workers, and in 1936 the number had risen to 13,017, of whom 3,814 were women. The salt mines are owned by the Government of India and worked by the Salt Department; they employed only 1,390 workers in 1936.

The largest non-regulated mining industry in India before the separation of Burma was that of petroleum, which is produced in the Punjab, Assam, and Burma. Nine-tenths of the output comes from Burma, and in 1929 the most important producers, the Burma Oil Company, employed 17,000 workers, of whom only about 12 per cent. were subject to the Factories Act. Special measures have, however, been taken to regulate the conditions of labour of workers not protected by factory legislation. The oilfields both in India and Burma are exempt from the operation of the Mines Act, and the Royal Commission on Labour in India recommended the enactment of legislation to regulate rest days, hours, and health and safety on the oilfields.³

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 107; *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1936, p. 67.

² *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1936, pp. 78 and 79.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 112.

PROVINCIAL DISTRIBUTION

The distribution of the various classes of mines and mining workers has already been mentioned incidentally above, and it will suffice here to give the general figures for the number of mines and of workers employed in each Province:

DISTRIBUTION BY PROVINCE OF MINING WORKERS
IN INDIA, 1936¹

Province	Average daily number of workers
Bihār	138,424
Bengal	51,705
Central Provinces	33,088
Burma	27,710
Others	18,666
Total	269,593

¹ Compiled from *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India, 1936*.

It will be seen from this table that the areas of mining employment are mainly in Bihār and Bengal; in which Provinces are found the coal deposits formerly known as the "Bengal coal fields". The most important coal fields are the Raniganj, which is mainly in Bengal and Jharia in Bihar. The Raniganj field has an area of 500 square miles, and in 1936 this area produced six million tons of coal, or about one-third of the total, and employed 55,936, or over one-fifth of all mining workers. Jharia has an area of 150 square miles; in 1936 it produced over 8 million tons of coal, or over two-fifths of the total, and employed 68,170 workers, or over one-fourth of all mining workers.¹

5. — Communications

The last main division of workers in organised industry consists of those employed on the railways, in navigation² and at the docks, in tramway and omnibus services and the postal, telegraph and telephone services. Some of these industries have connected

¹ *Report of the Indian Coal Committee, 1925, Vol. I, pp. 21-33*; *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India, 1936, pp. 60-63*.

² This Report does not cover conditions of employment in maritime or inland navigation, to which no further reference will be made.

and dependent industries, such as engineering workshops and public works, which also employ considerable numbers of workers, and which are in certain cases subject to the Factories Act.

According to the census of 1931, transport industries, including postal, telegraph and telephone services, gave occupation or means of livelihood to 2,341,406 persons, including 242,208 women, in the whole of India; the corresponding figures for British India were respectively 1,724,413 and 110,612. Moreover, 437,114 persons, including 330,782 in British India, were engaged in these industries as subsidiary occupations. As compared with the figure for 1921 there was an increase of 18.8 per cent. in the number of persons occupied in these industries in 1931. ¹

RAILWAY SERVANTS

In 1931, of the 2,341,406 persons gainfully occupied in transport industries in the whole of India, 630,311 or over one-fourth were employed on the railways; of these 464,713 were in British India. ² These figures do not include workers in workshops and other connected industries; nor do they include contractors and their labourers and labour paid by the day. In 1921, 165,203 persons, of whom 139,971 were unskilled labourers, were indirectly employed by the railways; in 1931 these figures were 30,930 and 27,996 respectively. ³

RAILWAY SERVANTS IN THE WHOLE OF INDIA IN
SPECIFIED YEARS ¹

Year ²	Europeans	Indians	Total
1901	5,489	364,948	370,437
1913-1914	7,986	625,319	633,305
1929-1930	4,981	812,752	817,733
1933-1934	3,906	697,456	701,362
1935-1936	3,219	709,145 ³	712,364

¹ Compiled from *Statistical Abstract for British India* and *Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways* for the respective years.

² The years chosen are those in which the number of railway servants or of a class reached the highest figure.

³ Comprising 504,977 Hindus, 155,439 Muslims, 13,423 Anglo-Indians, 8,740 Sikhs, 6,824 Indian Christians and 19,742 others.

¹ *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. I, Part II, p. 204; 1931, Vol. I, Part II, pp. 210-211.

² *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. I, Part II, pp. 210-211.

³ *Census of India*, 1921, p. 288; 1931, p. 316.

Up to the year 1924-1925 railway servants were classified as Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Indians, but since that year Anglo-Indians and Indians have been grouped together under the heading "Indians". It will be seen from the table that, while the total number of railway servants almost doubled between 1901 and 1933-1934, that of the Europeans has decreased since the year 1913-1914.

The figures given in the above table include all classes of railway servants. In the following table the numbers of 1935-1936 are classified according to grade.

GRADES OF INDIAN RAILWAY SERVANTS IN 1935-1936¹

Class	Europeans	Indians	Total	
			Number	Per cent. of total
Gazetted officers.	1,086	763	1,849	0.24
Subordinates drawing Rs.250 or more per month	1,227	6,863	8,090	1.13
Subordinates drawing less than Rs.250 per month	906	701,519	702,425	98.63
Total.	3,219	709,145	712,364	100.0

¹ Compiled from *Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways, 1935-1936*, Vol. I, pp. 56, 113 and 118.

DOCKERS

In 1931, the docks, harbours, rivers and canals in the whole of India gave employment to 55,350 persons, of whom 41,125 were in British India; in addition 3,913 persons in the whole of India (1,327 in British India) were in part-time employment. The principal ports of India are Calcutta, Bombay, Rangoon, Karachi, Madras and Chittagong. The control of these ports is invested in Port Trusts constituted by the Acts of Provincial Governments and consisting of representatives of shipping and commercial interests and a few officials and nominated members. In one or two ports the nominated members include a member representing labour interests and the Royal Commission on

Labour recommended that this practice should be extended to other major ports.¹

The relative importance of the principal ports as well as of the Port Trusts, as illustrated by their traffic, constitution, income, expenditure and capital debt, is shown in the following table :

PORTS AND PORT TRUSTS IN INDIA IN 1933-1934¹

Ports	Traffic Rs. (lakhs)	Constitution. Number of members	Income Rs. (lakhs)	Expenditure. Rs. (lakhs)	Capital debt. Rs. (lakhs)
Calcutta .	1,10,21	20	288	297	24,92
Bombay .	1,17,72	22	265	266	20,45
Rangoon .	57,00	17	71	72	5,24
Karachi .	40,95	14	65	64	4,28
Madras . .	27,25	15	30	30	1,54
Chittagong	8,82	12	8	7	27

¹ Compiled from *Statistical Abstract for British India, 1937*, Tables Nos. 168 and 206.

TRAMWAYMEN AND MOTOR OMNIBUS WORKERS

No statistical information is available concerning the total numbers of workers employed by tramway and omnibus services in India. There are very few tramway services. Only seventeen cities have a population of over 200,000, and of these only Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Rangoon, Cawnpore, Delhi and Karachi have tramways. In Calcutta and Bombay about 6,000 and 4,500 workers respectively are employed; the numbers employed in other cities are not known, but they are probably small.²

Motor omnibus services, particularly those engaged in urban and inter-urban traffic, have greatly increased within the last decade and employ large numbers of workers, but at present no statistical information is available.

PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

According to the census of 1931, the postal and telegraph services of India employed 134,309 persons, of whom 2,832 were

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 184.

² These figures refer to the year 1929. See the *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 189.

Europeans and Anglo-Indians. The following table gives the numbers employed in the various grades; it should be noted that the postmasters, signallers and other agents include a large number of railway station-masters and school teachers, for the latter of whom work in the postal service is a subsidiary occupation.

POSTAL AND TELEGRAPH EMPLOYEES IN 1931¹

Department or class	Europeans and Anglo Indians ²	Indians	Total
Supervising officers	397	900	1,297
Postmasters, signallers and other agents	2,010	24,521	26,531
Clerks of all kinds	328	20,259	20,587
Postmen	2	32,754	32,756
Skilled labour department	69	6,319	6,388
Unskilled labour department	2	12,613	12,615
Road establishments	—	18,695	18,695
Railway mail service	24	15,416	15,440
Total	2,832	131,477	134,309

¹ Compiled from *Census of India, 1931*, pp. 318-319.

² Anglo-Indians are statutory Indians, but the Census grouped them with Europeans.

A considerable amount of labour is employed by the Public Work Departments of the Provincial Governments for the construction and maintenance of irrigation works, canals, roads and buildings. Each Department consists of an Irrigation Branch and a Roads and Building Branch. It is only for the Irrigation Branches that figures of workers employed are available.

According to the census of 1931, the various Irrigation Branches employed 267,528 persons, of whom 89,826 worked directly under the Departments and 172,702 indirectly through contractors. The numbers employed in the several grades are shown in the table below :

PERSONS EMPLOYED DIRECTLY BY THE IRRIGATION DEPARTMENT 1931 ¹

Class	Europeans and Anglo-Indians	Indians	Total
Officers	263	841	1,104
Upper subordinates	25	1,428	1,453
Lower subordinates	8	2,528	2,536
Clerks	21	6,703	6,724
Peons and other servants	31	34,707	34,738
Labourers	18	43,253	43,271
Total	366	89,460	89,826

¹ Compiled from *Census of India*, 1931, p. 317.

The number of persons employed by the Irrigation Department indirectly is much larger than that employed directly. The following table gives the figures for 1931 :

PERSONS EMPLOYED INDIRECTLY BY THE IRRIGATION DEPARTMENT
IN 1931 ¹

Class	Europeans and Anglo-Indians	Indians	Total
Contractors	45	7,709	7,754
Regular employees	8	28,166	28,174
Labourers	—	136,774	136,774
Total	53	172,649	172,702

¹ *Census of India*, 1931, p. 317.

CHAPTER III

LABOUR LEGISLATION

The beginnings of labour legislation in India go back to the thirties of the last century, when, immediately after the abolition of slavery, various British colonies turned to India as a source of cheap labour, and considerable numbers of Indians began to emigrate as labourers under contracts of various types. As a result, the Government of India found it necessary to legislate for the regulation of the recruitment, forwarding and employment of Indian emigrants under the indenture system, and although this legislation applied only to emigration to foreign countries, it had a great influence upon the development of labour legislation within India, especially in connection with the recruitment, forwarding and employment of tea-garden labourers in Assam.

It was a characteristic of early labour legislation in India that it was enacted to meet the needs of specific branches of organised industry, such as plantations, mills or mines, the reason being that these industries developed in different parts of the country and at different times. No need was then felt for a uniform policy in labour legislation covering all industries; in recent years, although the principal branches of organised industry are still regulated by separate legislative measures, the tendency has been to draft legislation in accordance with uniform general principles, partly to take account of the Conventions of the International Labour Conference which have either been ratified or generally approved by India. Special legislation on such subjects as workmen's compensation and trade unionism has also been enacted covering workers in various branches of organised industry.

Under the Constitution of India which was in force up to the end of the period covered by this report, i.e. 31 March 1937, the Government of India as the Central Government had authority to

initiate legislative and administrative measures relating to labour for the whole of British India, but provincial Governments were largely entrusted with the administration of central legislation and might also undertake, with the sanction of the Governor-General in Council, the enactment of provincial labour legislation. Labour legislation in India thus fell under three distinct headings: (1) Acts which were enacted by the Central Legislature and largely administered by the Central Government, e.g. the Indian Mines Act, although Local Governments were also granted powers to make rules to carry out some of the objects and purposes of the Act; (2) Acts which were enacted by the Central Legislature, but administered by Local Governments and which the Local Governments were also granted powers to apply, either in full or in part, to undertakings other than those to which the Act applied automatically, e.g. the Indian Factories Act; and (3) Acts which, with the sanction of the Governor-General, were enacted by Provincial Legislatures and administered by Local Governments, e.g. the Bombay Maternity Benefit Act. The enactment of labour legislation in respect of Provinces which had no Legislative Councils was the concern of the Central Legislature.¹

I. — Plantation Legislation

The plantation industry was the first organised industry in India for which labour legislation was specially enacted. The main object of the early legislation relating to plantation labour was the regulation of the contractual relations between planters and labourers. This legislation aimed at providing the workers with steady work, adequate wages and proper health conditions, while guaranteeing the employers a stable labour force, for the recruitment and transportation of which they had often to spend considerable sums of money. After the abolition of the system of

¹ Under the new Constitution, which incorporates the principle of Provincial autonomy, the Provinces have very wide powers in regard to the enactment of labour legislation. Many of the most important subjects of labour legislation are indeed in the "concurrent legislative list", i.e. they may be dealt with both by Central and Provincial legislation, and provision may be made in Acts of the Central Legislature for the drafting of rules to be observed by Provincial Governments in the administration of Central Legislation. Subject to this, administration has become primarily a Provincial responsibility, and experience already seems to show that legislative activity will be greatest in the Provinces.

indentured labour, plantation legislation became exclusively concerned with the protection of the labourer as an emigrant.

ASSAM LABOUR AND EMIGRATION ACTS

Reference has already been made to the development of the tea-garden industry in Assam. This development was rendered particularly difficult by the scarcity of population in the province and its distance from the sources of labour supply. The recruiting of labour for the tea gardens was both complicated and expensive, and there arose a class of contractors or professional recruiters, called *Arkattis*, who resorted to various devices to recruit and forward labourers from Bengal and other provinces to Assam. Between 1863 and 1901 a series of legislative measures was passed providing for the licensing of recruiters, the registration of emigrants, the taking of sanitary precautions on the journey to the labour districts, the fixing of the duration of labour contracts at from three to five years, and the determining of wage scales. It was further provided that desertion and other forms of breach of contract on the part of labourers should be punishable by law, and planters were empowered to arrest absconders without warrant.

The Act of 1901 granted powers to Local Governments to close any area to recruitment except through licensed recruiters and tea-garden sardars, but this restriction was found to be insufficient and an amending Act was passed in 1908 prohibiting the conclusion of labour contracts with new recruits elsewhere than in the recruiting districts, and the entering into new contracts by time-expired labourers. Recruitment by unlicensed contractors and the right of arrest by planters were also prohibited, and facilities were created for recruitment by garden sardars under certain conditions. Moreover, in the same year, the provisions relating to indentured labour were by notification made inoperative in the Surma Valley and in the two lower districts of the Assam Valley.

A further step was taken in 1915 with the passing of the Assam Labour and Emigration (Amendment) Act, No. VIII of 1915. By this amendment, the indentured labour system was abolished in respect of the other districts of the Assam Valley, recruitment by contractors of all kinds was suppressed, and provision was made for the creation of an Assam Labour Board for

the supervision of recruitment by garden sardars under local agents.

PENAL SANCTIONS IN OTHER LEGISLATION

These amendments of the Assam Labour and Emigration Act did not, however, result in the abolition of criminal penalties for breach of labour contract, for which provisions were contained in other legislation still in force. The most important of these laws was the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act of 1859. This Act, which was the earliest Act providing for criminal penalties for breach of contract and was of general application in the cases falling within its scope,¹ continued to be applied to tea-garden labour up to the year 1920. In that year, the provisions of the Act were somewhat modified,² and in 1923, following the recommendations of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1921-1922, which considered penal sanctions to be an anachronism, an Act was passed repealing the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act and two sections of the Indian Penal Code under which workmen could be punished for breach of contract. This repealing Act came into force on 1 April 1926.³

Penal sanction legislation, however, still existed in other provinces. In Madras a Planters' Labour Act had been passed in 1903, which was applicable to workers employed on plantations in two Madras districts and included provisions both for criminal penalties for breach of contract and for the welfare of the workmen subject to these penalties. This Act was repealed in 1927 by an Act which came into force at the beginning of 1929.⁴

When the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act of 1859 was repealed, the Government of India indicated that Local Governments and Administrations might give some temporary relief to employers. In virtue of this concession, and as a result of representations made by the planters and the local landholders⁵ in Coorg, the Coorg Legislative Council passed the Coorg Labour Act of 1926, the principles of which were based on those of the

¹ The full title was: "Act to provide for the punishment of breaches of contract by artificers, workmen and labourers in certain cases."

² *Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee, 1921-1922*, pp. 75-76.

³ *Report on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam, 1926*, p. 3; A. G. CLOW: *The State and Industry*, Government of India, 1928, p. 163.

⁴ A. G. CLOW: *The State and Industry*, p. 165.

⁵ Landholders depend upon outside labour for the cultivation of land.

Workmen's Breach of Contract Act. The operation of this Act, however, was limited to five years only, and its scope was confined to workmen employed in the cultivation and the production of coffee, tea, rubber and other agricultural products. The Act expired on 1 April 1931¹ and has not been re-enacted.

THE TEA DISTRICTS EMIGRANT LABOUR ACT, 1932

In the meantime, the application of the regulations regarding recruitment and engagement of labour for Assam tea gardens became more and more difficult, and in 1926 the Government of India addressed the Local Governments concerned regarding the desirability of the abolition or modification of the existing restrictions on recruitment. The replies of the Local Governments affirmed the unsatisfactory character of some of the restrictions, but considered it necessary to preserve others. Accordingly, in 1928, the Government of India drafted an Assam Recruitment Bill, but the Bill was not proceeded with pending enquiry and report by the Royal Commission on Labour in India, the appointment of which was then under consideration. This Commission² was appointed on 4 July 1929 with the following terms of reference : " To enquire into and report on the existing conditions of labour in industrial undertakings and plantations in British India, on the health, efficiency and standard of living of the workers, and on the relations between employers and employed, and to make recommendations. " ³ The Commission made its report in June 1931. ⁴

As far as plantation legislation is concerned, the Commission found the Assam Labour and Emigration Act of 1901 open to

¹ A. G. CLOW : *The State and Industry*, p. 164 ; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 355-356.

² *Gazette of India*, 12 March 1932, Part V, pp. 125-134. The Commission consisted of the Rt. Hon. Mr. J. H. Whitley, formerly Speaker of the British House of Commons, as Chairman ; and the following members : the Rt. Hon. Mr. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri ; Sir Alexander R. Murray, C.B.E. ; Sir Ibrahim Rahimtoola, K.C.S.I., C.I.E. ; Sir Victor Sassoon ; Mr. N. M. Joshi ; Mr. A. G. Clow, C.I.E., I.C.S. ; Mr. G. D. Birla ; Mr. John Cliff ; Diwan Chaman Lal ; Miss Beryl ; M. le Poer Power ; and Mr. Kabeer-ud-din Ahmed.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 1.

⁴ Great Britain : Royal Commission on Labour in India : *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1931, xvii+580 pp.

several objections. It was unintelligible to most people and obsolete in many parts owing to the recent amendments; but its main defect was that it seriously hampered the free flow of labour to the Assam tea gardens. The Commission therefore recommended the enactment of new legislation and elaborated a scheme with the object of securing the free movement of labour, a more stable labour force, and better administration of the law.¹ On the basis of these recommendations, the Indian Legislature passed a new Act, the Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act, in 1932. This Act replaced the Assam Labour and Emigration Act of 1901, thus removing the last of the Acts which provided for contract labour; it came into force on 1 October 1933.² The main provisions of the Act are as follows :³

(1) Every emigrant labourer, i.e. a person who last entered Assam as an assisted emigrant and is employed on a tea estate, and his family, have a right of repatriation at the expense of the employer on the expiry of three years after entry into Assam ; provision is also made for earlier repatriation in certain circumstances and for repatriation of families of deceased labourers.

(2) No child, i.e. a person under 16 years of age, may be assisted to proceed to Assam to work on a tea estate unless such child is accompanied by a parent or other adult relative on whom the child is dependent. A married woman who is living with her husband may only be assisted to emigrate with the consent of the husband.

(3) Provincial Governments are empowered⁴, subject to the control of the Governor-General in Council, to declare any area to be a controlled emigration area, and thereafter any assisted emigrant, i.e. any adult who has received assistance from any person to proceed to Assam as a labourer on a tea estate, unless such adult has worked as a labourer on a tea estate within the last two years, may only be forwarded to Assam by a licensed forwarding agent, acting on behalf of an employer or employers of labour,

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 359-382.

² *Annual Report on the Working of the Assam Labour Board, 1932-1933*, p. 5 ; Government of India : Department of Industries and Labour : *Third Report showing the Action taken by the Central and Provincial Governments on the Recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Labour in India, 1933*, p. 32. This document will be hereafter referred to as *Third Report of the Government of India*.

³ Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act, No. XXII of 1932. *Legislative Series, 1932*, Ind. 4.

⁴ These powers have passed to the Central Government under the new Constitution.

and only by prescribed routes and subject to proper provision having been made for accommodation, feeding and sanitary arrangements on the journey.

(4) Provincial Governments are also empowered,¹ with the previous sanction of the Governor-General in Council, to declare any controlled emigration area or part thereof to be a restricted recruiting area, and thereafter no person may offer to assist another to proceed to Assam as an assisted emigrant except a licensed forwarding agent, a licensed recruiter or a garden sardar (a labourer or other person employed on a tea estate) holding a certificate from the owner or manager of a tea estate.

(5) The Assam Labour Board was dissolved and provision made for the appointment of a Controller of Emigrant Labour and one or more deputy controllers of emigrant labour to exercise various powers and discharge various duties under the Act; the expenses of the department of the Controller of Emigrant Labour and certain other expenses of administration of the Act are defrayed from an Emigrant Labour Fund constituted by payments made by employers in respect of all assisted emigrants entering Assam who are recruited on their behalf.

(6) Power is reserved to the Governor-General in Council to extend the application of the Act to lands and premises in Assam other than tea estates.

It will be observed that the provisions of the Act relating to the control of emigration and recruitment are permissive. Unless Government otherwise decides, both emigration and recruiting are unregulated, it being the intention of the Legislature that the recruiting and forwarding of labour to Assam should be freed from legal restriction and control and that regulation should only be introduced if Government deems it necessary. Moreover, the control of the forwarding of assisted emigrants from a controlled emigration area does not involve the regulation of recruitment, for which a further decision is required. The Act itself does not define the circumstances in which Government would be justified in imposing the control of emigration or the restriction of recruiting, but it is evident from the report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India that the criterion, as regards the restriction of recruiting, would be the existence of abuses so

¹ These powers have passed to the Central Government under the new Constitution.

serious as to necessitate the re-introduction of what the Commission described as the "extreme step" of control.¹ In practice, almost all the recruiting areas have been declared to be "controlled emigration areas," but the power to declare such controlled emigration areas to be "restricted recruiting areas" has not been used.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE LAW

Rules under the Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act of 1932 may be made by the authorities² for a variety of purposes, including the regulation of the procedure of the Controller of Emigrant Labour and of other persons and authorities exercising his powers, prescribing the qualifications of persons who may be granted recruiting licences, regulating various matters connected with the forwarding of assisted emigrants, registers, returns, repatriation, etc., prescribing the procedure of the collection of the payments by which the Emigrant Labour Fund is constituted, and regulating the procedure of recruitment and forwarding, such as the licensing of recruiting and forwarding agents and accommodation, diet and sanitation in depôts and conveyances *en route*, in respect of areas declared to be controlled emigration areas or restricted recruiting areas.

The Government is also empowered to make rules for Assam regulating the procedure of owners and managers in granting and withdrawing certificates to labourers to act as garden sardars in recruiting labour and prescribing the form and particulars of such certificates, and, by notification in the local official gazette, requiring tea estates to submit returns of wages and earnings of labourers employed by them.

The supervision of the application of the Act and of the rules made thereunder is exercised by the Controller of Emigrant Labour or any other persons or authorities vested with his powers. His principal duties are : (1) the enforcement of the provisions relating to repatriation from Assam, district magistrates in Assam being empowered to exercise his powers in their own districts ; (2) the supervision of the forwarding routes, e.g. inspection of

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 372.

² Now the Central Government.

depôts, trains, vessels or vehicles, etc. ; (3) the supervision of recruiting.

2. — Factory Legislation

While plantation legislation in India, as described in the preceding section, is almost exclusively concerned with the manner in which labour is obtained, factory legislation is wholly devoted to the conditions under which labour is employed.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The first Indian Factories Act was passed in 1881. As was described in Chapter II, the development of the cotton mill industry had begun in Bombay some twenty years before, and, as a result partly of the feeling aroused by the extent to which, and the conditions under which, women and children were employed, and partly of the concern of Lancashire cotton manufacturers at the appearance of new competitors in the Indian market, a demand arose for factory legislation. A Factory Commission was appointed in 1875 by the Government of Bombay, and although the majority of the Commission was opposed to legislative intervention, the Government of India passed the Act of 1881. In addition to provisions relating to health and safety, this Act limited the employment of children in factories, a "factory" being defined to be any premises using mechanical power and in which 100 persons or more were employed for four months or more in the year. A "child" was defined as any person below the age of 12 years ; no child under 7 years of age might be employed, and the hours of work of children were limited to 9 in the day with an interval of rest of one hour ; it was also provided that children should have four holidays in the month.

Dissatisfaction with the provisions for the protection of children and, in particular, the absence of any regulation of women's labour, gave rise to an agitation for the amendment of the Act as soon as it was passed. The question was investigated by a Bombay Factory Commission in 1884 and a Factory Labour Commission in 1890, and, on the basis of the recommendations of the latter Commission, an amending Act was passed in 1891. By this Act, the definition of "factory" was amended to include pre-

mises in which 50 persons or more were employed and Local Governments were granted powers to extend it to premises in which 20 persons or more were employed. Provisions relating to women's work were now introduced, the hours of work of women being limited to 11 a day, with an interval of rest for an hour-and-a-half or proportionately less for a lesser number of hours. "Child" was defined to be any person below the age of 14 years; the minimum age for the admission of children to employment was raised to 9 years, and the hours of work of children were limited to 7 in the day, with an interval or intervals of rest amounting in the aggregate to half an hour.

After 1891 there was a prolonged depression in the cotton mill industry, but a boom in 1904-1905 led to long hours being worked and the question of regulating the hours of work of adult male workers was raised. Investigations were made by a Textile Committee in 1906 and a Factory Labour Commission in 1907, and, on their recommendations, a new Indian Factories Act was passed in 1911. The principal changes made by this Act were as follows : (1) the hours of work of men employed in textile factories were limited to 12 in the day ; (2) the hours of work of children employed in textile factories were reduced to 6 in the day and all children were required to be in possession of a certificate stating whether they were fit for employment as well as their age ; (3) women and children were prohibited from employment in certain dangerous processes ; and (4) the employment of women and children between the hours of 7 p.m. and 5.30 a.m. was prohibited.

The next important amendment of Indian factory legislation was made in 1922, when an Indian Factories (Amendment) Act was passed with the object, among other things, of giving legislative effect to the International Labour Conventions on hours of work, the minimum age for admission of children to employment, the night work of women, and the night work of young persons.

Of these Conventions, those relating to hours of work and the night work of women and young persons were ratified by the Government of India in 1921, and, although the Minimum Age (Industry). Convention, 1919, could not be ratified owing to difficulties on certain points, its provisions had been generally accepted as regards factories covered by the Indian Factories Act.

It will be remembered that the Hours Convention, in its

Article 10, made special provision for India, laying down that "the principle of a sixty-hour week shall be adopted for all workers in the industries at present covered by the Factory Acts administered by the Government of India".¹ In derogation from the provisions fixing 14 years as the minimum age for the admission of children to employment in industrial undertakings, the Minimum Age Convention, in Article 6, fixed the minimum age for India at 12 years for employment in factories working with power and employing more than 10 persons, in mines, and in transport.² The Night Work (Women) Convention prohibited the employment at night of women without distinction of age, but permitted India to suspend the prohibition in respect of industrial undertakings other than factories as defined by the Factories Act.³ The Night Work (Young Persons) Convention also made an exception to the rule prohibiting the employment of young persons under 18 years of age at night, providing that in the case of India, the age should be 14 years and the application of the Convention limited to factories as defined in the Indian Factories Act.⁴

The Act of 1922 did more than give effect to these provisions, as will be seen from the following summary of the principal amendments made by the Act : (1) The scope of the Act of 1911 was extended to include industrial undertakings using mechanical power and employing not less than 20 persons, Local Governments also being given the power to declare, by notification, that undertakings employing not less than 10 persons, and working with or without mechanical power should be deemed to be factories for the purposes of the Act. (2) The hours of work of all adult workers were restricted to 11 in any one day and 60 in any one week. (3) A "child" was now defined as a person who was under 15 years of age ; the minimum age for the admission of children to employment was raised to 12 years ; the hours of work of all children were limited to 6 in the day, with a rest period of half an hour for children working more than 5½ hours ; further, in addition to medical examination for age and physical fitness before admission to employment in factories, children were required to undergo re-examination for continuing

¹ INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE : *Conventions and Recommendations*, 1919-1937, Convention No. 1, Article 10.

² *Ibid.*, Convention No. 5, Article 6.

³ *Ibid.*, Convention No. 4, Article 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Convention No. 6, Article 6.

work, if thought necessary by an inspector. (4) No person was to be permitted to work more than 5 hours continuously, and a rest period of one hour, which could be divided into two periods at the option of the worker, was to be given in respect of each period of 6 hours' work done; the provisions for the Sunday rest were amended to secure that the exceptions should not involve any person working for more than ten days without a day's holiday. (5) In case of overtime, workers were to receive at least one-and-a-quarter times the normal rate of pay. (6) Women and young persons under 18 years of age were prohibited from employment in certain lead processes.¹

Some minor amendments to the Indian Factories Act were made in 1923, 1926 and 1931² — the Act of 1926 provided, *inter alia*, for the imposition of penalties on parents or guardians who permitted children to work in two factories on the same day — but no changes of importance were made until the Act of 1934, which was based on the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Labour in India.

THE INDIAN FACTORIES ACT, 1934

Whereas the Act of 1922 was a measure amending by reference the Act of 1911, the Indian Factories Act of 1934 is a new consolidating and amending Act containing extensive improvements in drafting and arrangement as well as many amendments in substance and detail. The main purposes of this Act, which came into force on 1 January 1935, have been stated to be: (1) the reduction of hours of work, (2) the improvement of working conditions, and (3) better observance by factories of the provisions of the Act.³ The most important changes made by the Act are the following:⁴

(1) No essential alteration is made in the definition of "factory", but a distinction has been introduced between non-seasonal (perennial) factories and seasonal factories, the latter

¹ Indian Factories (Amendment) Act, No. II of 1922. *Legislative Series*, 1922, Ind. 1.

² Indian Factories (Amendment) Acts, Nos. IX of 1923, XXVI of 1926, and XIII of 1931. *Legislative Series*, 1923, Ind. 2; 1926, Ind. 2; 1931, Ind. 2.

³ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR: Circular Letter No. L/301, 10 June 1932, *Labour Gazette* (Bombay), January 1933, pp. 353-359.

⁴ Factories Act, No. XXV of 1934. *Legislative Series*, 1934, Ind. 2.

being defined as factories engaged in cotton ginning, cotton or jute pressing, the decortication of ground nuts, the manufacture of coffee, indigo, lac, rubber, sugar (including *gur*) or tea. If, however, such factories work more than 180 days in the year, Local Governments may declare them not to be seasonal factories. Further, factories engaged in other manufacturing processes of a seasonal character and not working more than 180 days in the year may be declared to be seasonal factories.

(2) The importance of the distinction between non-seasonal and seasonal factories is seen more especially in the provisions relating to hours of work, for whereas the Act lays down a 54-hour week and a 10-hour day for adult workers in non-seasonal factories, the 60-hour week and the 11-hour day are retained for seasonal factories. The reduction of hours of work of adult workers in non-seasonal factories is subject to the proviso that, in work which for technical reasons must be carried on continuously, the working week may be 56 hours. For the payment of overtime, the time-and-a-quarter rate is maintained for any hours worked in a non-seasonal factory in excess of 54 or 56 up to 60 hours, but any hours worked in excess of 60 either in a non-seasonal or a seasonal factory must be paid at the rate of time-and-a-half ; this rate is also prescribed for work in a non-seasonal factory in excess of ten hours in the day.

(3) The hours of work of children (persons between the ages of 12 and 15 years) are reduced from 6 to 5 a day, and those of women from 11 to 10 a day, in both seasonal and non-seasonal factories. A new principle has been introduced in virtue of which " adolescents ", i.e. young persons between the ages of 15 and 17 years, may not be employed as adults unless they have been medically certified to be fit to work as adults.

(4) The Act also deals with the question of spreadover and provides that the periods of work of adult workers must be so arranged that, including rest intervals, they do not spread over more than 13 hours ; for children the spreadover may not be more than $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours. The new night-work provisions stipulate that women and children may not be employed before 6 a.m. or after 7 p.m., but the Local Government may, by notification in the local official gazette, vary these limits so as to make the working day fall within any span of 13 hours between 5 a.m. and 7.30 p.m.

(5) The provisions for health and safety have been amplified and made more definite, and the powers of the inspectors of factories have been enlarged. The Local Governments are empowered to make rules: (a) prescribing standards of artificial humidification and methods to be adopted to secure their observance; (b) protecting workers against the effects of excessive heat; (c) requiring any factory employing more than 150 workers to provide adequate shelter for the use of workers during the periods of rest; (d) requiring any factory employing more than 50 women to reserve a suitable room for the use of children under 6 years of age belonging to such women; and (e) requiring factories to secure a certificate of the suitability of any building which is new or in which any structural alteration has been made. Local Governments are also empowered to make rules in regard to hazardous operations, prohibiting or restricting the employment of women, adolescents or children, and providing for the protection of all workers engaged in such operations.

(6) The provisions governing the observance of the law by employers have been clarified and elaborated. In particular, while the old standard fine of Rs.500 for major offences is retained, provision is now made for enhanced penalties for subsequent convictions in the case of offences mainly relating to hours of work and rest, payment of overtime, and the employment of children, adolescents and women.

Two Acts amending the Factories Act, 1934, were passed in 1935 and 1936. Act No. XI of 1935 brings Indian law into line with the Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1934, and Act No. VIII of 1936 widens the powers of Local Governments in regard to workshops.¹

NON-REGULATED FACTORIES

It has been noted above that the Indian Factories Act of 1934 made no substantial change in the definition of a "factory", with the result that the Act only applies to undertakings employing 20 workers or more on any day during the preceding twelve months and in which mechanical power is used, except in so far as Local Governments may make use of their power to declare undertakings employing more than ten workers, and working with or

¹ *Legislative Series*, 1936, Ind. 3.

without the aid of power, to be factories. Generally, therefore, the following two kinds of factories are non-regulated : (1) those which use power, but do not employ 20 persons or more, and (2) those which do not use power, irrespective of the number of persons employed.

To bring these undertakings under regulation, the Royal Commission on Labour recommended the application by Local Governments of the whole or part of the Factories Act to factories of the first category, and, in respect of factories of the second category, the enactment of a separate and simple Act providing, among other things, that the minimum age for admission of children to employment in such factories should be 10 years, and that the hours of work of children between the ages of 10 and 14 years should be limited to 7 in the day. The Commission also recommended that both kinds of factories should be required to be registered with the factory inspection departments and that inspections should be carried out by part-time inspectors and be co-ordinated by the chief inspectors in consultation with the medical authorities.

No legislative action has yet been taken by the Government of India to implement the Labour Commission's recommendation that a separate Act should be passed relating to workshops, i.e. the second class of non-regulated factories mentioned above, but the matter has been considered by the Government, which placed it before the Industries Conference, consisting of representatives of the Government of India, Provincial Governments and State Governments, in 1935.¹ One Provincial Act has, however, been passed, the Central Provinces Act to regulate labour in un-regulated factories (No. XXI of 1937).²

This Act applies within such areas of the Central Provinces as the Local Government may select and there, in the first instance, only to workshops employing 50 or more persons and engaged in the making of *bidis* (Indian cigarettes), shellac manufacture or leather tanning, three industries mentioned by the Labour Commission as specially requiring attention. The operation of the Act can, however, be extended to other industries and to workshops employing 25 or more persons.

¹ *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 61 : Indian Labour Legislation, 1932-1937, p. 50.

² *Legislative Series*, 1937, Ind. 3.

Hours of work are limited under the Act to ten in the day, with a break of half-an-hour after five hours' work, and no worker may work more than six consecutive days without a holiday for a whole day. The Act implicitly fixes 10 years as the minimum age for admission of children to employment in the factories covered, and makes employment of children between that age and 14 years dependent upon the possession of a certificate of fitness issued by a certifying surgeon appointed under the Act; the hours of work of children may not exceed seven in the day and must fall between 8 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.; overtime, home work and work in any other factory is prohibited in the case of children. Women may not be employed for more than nine hours in the day, nor before sunrise or after sunset. The Act also makes provision for the appointment of inspectors and certifying surgeons, for health and safety measures, for the keeping of registers and the making of rules.

Mention may also be made of two private members' Bills, which were permitted to be introduced into the Madras Legislative Council in 1932 and 1933, namely, the Artisan Bill and the *Bidi* (Cigarette) Factories Bill.¹ These Bills proposed to regulate the employment of labour in handicraft workshops (in which gold, silver and other metals, as well as wood, stone and ivory are worked), and also *bidi* (cigarette) factories, which employ more than 10 persons, and the provisions relating to the employment of women and children, as well as to health and safety and hours of work, were mainly based upon the Indian Factories Act of 1934.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE LAW

While the rule-making power under the Indian Factories Act of 1934 was reserved, in respect of certain matters, to the Governor-General in Council, extensive powers to make rules were conferred on Local Governments, who are entrusted with the administration of the Act and the organisation of inspection.²

There has been considerable development of the factory

¹ Government of Madras, Bills Nos. 22 and 36 of 1933, *Labour Gazette* (Bombay), 13 March 1933, p. 516.

² The rule-making power has now passed entirely to the Provincial Governments.

inspection organisation since the introduction of factory legislation, and the present Act provides that a Local Government may appoint such persons as it thinks fit to be inspectors and a chief inspector. In addition, a Local Government may appoint public officers to be additional inspectors. District magistrates are *ex-officio* inspectors in their own districts. The work of additional and *ex-officio* inspectors is particularly important in the case of seasonal factories, and the Government of India has reported that the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Labour that such inspectors should be used for the inspection of seasonal factories has been implemented by several provinces.¹

The Royal Commission on Labour made further recommendations for the improvement of factory inspection, in particular by (1) the appointment of women inspectors; (2) the co-ordination of inspection services; (3) the appointment of medical inspectors.

When the Commission reported only one province, the Bombay Presidency, had appointed a woman inspector. This appointment was made in 1924, and the inspector was largely employed in the inauguration and inspection of crèches in cotton mills. The Commission recommended that women inspectors should be more widely employed on this and other welfare work as well as in the enforcement of the law in respect of women workers and such duties as checking hours of work. According to the third report of the Government of India on the effect given to the recommendations of the Commission, some provinces, e.g. the United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa, were utilising the services of lady doctors as part-time inspectors, but others had found it difficult to appoint women factory inspectors during the economic depression.²

In addition to the appointment of a Central Labour Commissioner by the Government of India and of Provincial Labour Commissioners, whose duties would be to centralise all matters relating to labour, the Commission recommended periodical conferences of chief inspectors of factories and conferences of inspectors of all grades. A Labour Commissioner was appointed by the Government of Bombay on 1 May 1933 and similar appointments

¹ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA: *Third Report*, 1934, p. 116.

² *Ibid.*, p. 108.

are reported to be under consideration by several other Provincial Governments.

As regards medical inspection, the Commission recommended the appointment of at least one medical inspector of factories either part or full time, in every province ; their work could be combined with that of certifying surgeons, but where the latter are separate offices they should also be empowered as inspectors. In some provinces, e.g. the United Provinces, the practice is in accordance with the recommendation, while others have fully or partially implemented the recommendation. The Government of Bengal has, for instance, appointed the full-time certifying surgeon to be an additional inspector of factories, and the Government of Bombay has also decided to appoint sub-medical officers as additional factory inspectors. ¹

The development of factory inspection is illustrated by the increase in the number of factories inspected in proportion to the total number. While in the year 1919, when the figures for such inspection became available for the first time, only 77 per cent. of the factories were inspected, this percentage rose to 86.4 in 1936. ² At the same time there was, of course, a large increase in the number of factories. Besides regular inspection, inspectors also make special visits to factories for the purpose of detecting the irregular employment of workers. The main provisions of the law are stated to be generally observed, especially by the perennial factories. ³ The number of convictions for offences under the old Factories Act was 625 in 1924, the first year for which full details regarding convictions were available; in 1936 the figure was 940, of which 533 were convictions for offences against the provisions relating to employment and hours of work, 214 for offences as regards notices, registers and returns, 140 for offences relating to safety provisions, 33 for offences regarding sanitation and welfare, and 20 others. ⁴

¹ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Third Report*, 1934, p. 106.

² *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act*, 1921 and 1923, Statement VIII.

³ *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act*, 1933, p. 2.

⁴ *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act* for the respective years.

3. — Mining Legislation

It is expressly stipulated in the Indian Factories Act that the Act does not apply to mines subject to Indian mining legislation, which, as stated above, has developed independently of other classes of labour legislation.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Mining on a large scale was a comparatively late development in India and it was possibly due to this circumstance, together with the fact that the most important class of mines, i.e. coal mines, are near the surface and are comparatively easy to work owing to the thickness of the seams (10 feet and over), that no measures for regulating the employment of labour in mines were taken until the last decade of the nineteenth century. The first step was taken in 1893 when, as a result of the increase in the number of workers employed, and especially of children and women, in an industry which is particularly subject to insanitary conditions and accidents, a mining inspector was appointed. This appointment was followed in 1895 by the setting up of a Mining Committee to draft rules, and on the basis of its report the first Indian Mines Act was passed in 1901 and came into effect on 22 March of the same year.¹

The chief provisions of the 1901 Act were the following : (1) any excavation 20 feet below the surface where minerals were searched for or obtained was to be regarded as a mine ; (2) a Chief Inspector of Mines was to be appointed by the Government of India and inspectors or subordinate officers by Local Governments ; (3) a child was defined to be a person under the age of 12 years and the Chief Inspector was granted power to prohibit the employment of children and of women in mines where the conditions, in his opinion, were dangerous to their health and safety ; (4) local mining boards and committees were to be appointed to enquire into cases of accidents or dangers considered by the inspector to be the result of mismanagement and into such other matters as might be referred to them ; (5) powers were granted both to the Government of India and to Local Governments to make rules to carry out the objects and purposes of the

¹ Indian Mines Act (VIII) of 1901 ; *Report of the Chief Commissioner of Mines in India, 1901*, p. 43.

Act in regard to health and safety, the appointment of boards and committees, the employment of women and children, and the duties and qualifications of managers ; (6) breaches of the law were to be punishable by fines not exceeding Rs.500 or imprisonment not exceeding three months, or both. .

The Act of 1901 proved to be defective in several respects, including (1) lack of provisions for regulating the conditions of employment, (2) inadequate provisions for regulating the labour of women and children, and (3) lack of definite division of authority between the Central and Local Governments regarding administration. ¹ Moreover, ratification by the Government of India in 1921 of the Hours Convention made it necessary to amend the Act in order to conform to the principle of the 60-hour week. A new Act was therefore passed in 1923, and came into force on 1 July 1924. ² •

This Act made a number of important amendments to the provisions of the Act of 1901 : • (1) the definition of a mine was extended to include any excavation, irrespective of depth, for searching for or obtaining minerals, (2) the weekly hours of work were limited to 54 underground and 60 above ground, (3) working days were limited to 6 in the week, (4) the definition of " child " was amended to mean any person under the age of 13 years, and no child was allowed to be employed in a mine or to be present in any part of a mine which was below ground. Other amendments made more precise the division of the rule-making power between the Governor-General in Council and Local Governments, reserving to the former, in particular, the power to prohibit, restrict or regulate the employment of women.

It will be noted that the Act placed no statutory limitation on the daily hours of work and it was alleged that in certain cases workers were underground for as long as 17 or 18 hours a day. ³ This fact, and the consequent difficulty of checking hours of work without a daily limit, led to the enactment of an amending Act in 1928. By this amendment it was made unlawful to employ any person in any mine for more than 12 hours in any period of 24 consecutive hours. It was also provided that work should not be carried on in any mine for a period exceeding 12 hours in any consecutive period of 24 hours except by a system of shifts so

¹ A. G. CLOW : *The State and Industry*, 1928, pp. 152-156.

² Indian Mines Act, No. IV of 1923. *Legislative Series*, 1923, Ind. 3.

³ *Legislative Assembly Debates*, 8 April 1935, p. 3953.

arranged that there should be no overlapping of shifts, and that a register of workers and their hours of work should be maintained in all mines. Some sections of the Act came into force immediately, while others were not put into operation until 7 April 1930, so that mine owners might have time to make the necessary adjustment.¹ The Act was again amended in 1931 for some minor purposes.²

THE INDIAN MINES (AMENDMENT) ACT, 1935

It is of importance to note that, before the passage of the amending Act of 1928, the majority of the members in the Select Committee on the Bill agreed that it was desirable that progress should be made towards an 8-hour day and recommended that, after the Act had been in force for three years, the situation should be examined in order to see whether 8-hour shifts could then be introduced. The question of shorter hours in mines was again considered by the Royal Commission on Labour. The minority of the Commission stressed the point that some of the larger collieries were already working 8-hour shifts and other collieries 10-hour shifts, and that it was significant that in these collieries the attendance and wage levels seemed to be higher; the minority therefore proposed a daily limit of 8 hours. This view was not, however, adopted by the majority of the Commission. Having regard to the difficulty of adjustment and the fact that workers were unaccustomed to regular hours, they recommended the reduction of hours worked on the surface to 54 a week and the examination of the possibility of a daily limitation to 10, 9 or 8 hours.³

In 1931 the International Labour Conference, at its Fifteenth Session, adopted a Draft Convention limiting hours of work to 7 hours and 45 minutes a day for underground work in hard-coal mines.⁴ This Draft Convention was considered by both Chambers of the Indian Legislature which recommended that the Governor-General in Council should examine the possibility of

¹ Indian Mines (Amendment) Act, No. XIII of 1928. *Legislative Series*, 1928, Ind. 1.

² *Labour Gazette*, Bombay, October 1931, p. 137.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 126-129.

⁴ INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE: *Conventions and Recommendations*, 1919-1937, Convention No. 31.

further limiting hours of work in mines and should place the results of this examination before them.¹

In accordance with this resolution, the Government of India addressed, on 21 September 1932, a circular letter² to Local Governments and Administrations for their opinions, suggesting at the same time that 9 hours was as low a daily limit as could possibly be adopted at present. The circular also agreed provisionally with the following recommendations of the Royal Commission on Labour : (a) that no child under 14 years of age should be permitted to work in or about a mine ; (b) that all accidents likely to involve enforced absence in excess of the waiting period under the Workmen's Compensation Act should be reported weekly to the Chief Inspector through the district magistrates, and (c) that it should be obligatory for Local Governments to publish reports of courts of enquiry appointed by them under the Act to enquire into accidents.

In the light of the opinions and criticisms of the Local Governments and other interested parties, the Government of India framed a new Bill further to amend the Indian Mines Act, 1923, for certain purposes, and introduced it into the Legislative Assembly on 22 January 1935.³ The Bill was passed by the Assembly and the Council of State on 8 and 15 April respectively and was assented to by the Governor-General on 21 April 1935.⁴ It came into force on 1 October 1935. The main amendments made by the Act are the following :

(1) Hours of work above ground are reduced from 60 in the week and 12 in the day to 54 in the week and 10 in the day. The period of spreadover for work above ground is limited to 12 hours in the day including at least one hour's rest for 6 hours' work. The weekly hours of work below ground are the same as before, i.e. 54 hours, but daily hours are reduced from 12 to 9; moreover, these 9 hours are to be counted from the moment the first worker leaves the surface until the moment when the last worker returns to the surface, so that, excluding the journey to and from the

¹ *Legislative Assembly Debates*, 24 February 1932 ; *Council of State Debates*, 2 March 1932.

² *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 49, Reduction of Hours of Work in Mines, 1932, pp. 1-4.

³ *Legislative Assembly Debates*, 8 April 1935, pp. 3940-3958 ; *Council of State Debates*, 17 April 1935, pp. 903-906.

⁴ Indian Mines (Amendment) Act, No. V of 1935. *Legislative Series*, 1935, Ind. 3.

face, the actual hours of work underground are not likely to exceed 8 in some mines.

(2) The minimum age for the admission of children to employment in mines is raised from 13 to 15 years, and adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17 years can be employed underground only when they have been duly certified by qualified medical practitioners to be physically fit for the work ; the certificate of fitness must be in the custody of the manager of the mine and the certified person must carry a token of such certificate while at work.

(3) The Act of 1923 provided that Local Governments might set up Mining Boards consisting of a person nominated by the Local Government as chairman, the Chief Inspector or an inspector, two persons nominated by the Local Government, of whom one should be qualified to represent the interests of the workers, and two representatives nominated by the mine owners. The new Act provides that the miners should also have two representatives and that, in so far as they are organised, these representatives should be elected.

(4) The Act also provides that (a) a record of accidents involving incapacity for 24 hours or more should be entered in the prescribed register and that copies of the entry should be submitted to the Chief Inspector of Mines twice a year, and (b) Local Governments should publish the reports of courts of enquiry into accidents.

The question of further reduction of hours of work, especially those of underground workers, was pressed in the Legislative Assembly, and an undertaking was given by Government that after three years the whole question would be re-examined with a view to ascertaining whether hours could not be further reduced.

The safety provisions of the Act were further reinforced by an amending Act of 26 April 1936.¹

PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION

Provincial mining legislation is limited to the Mines Boards of Health Acts, the Bengal Mining Settlement Act of 1912 and the Bihar and Orissa Settlement Act of 1920, and makes provision for

¹ Indian Mines (Amendment) Act, No. XI of 1936. *Legislative Series*, 1936, Ind. 2.

sanitary arrangements and housing accommodation in mining areas.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE LAW

The administration of Indian mining legislation is the concern of the Central Government. The Chief Inspector of Mines and the inspectors of mines are appointed by the Governor-General in Council, who is also empowered to make regulations prescribing and regulating the duties and powers of the inspectors as well as regulations relating to health and safety, the duties and responsibilities of employers, etc. Among the powers of the Governor-General in Council is that of prohibiting, restricting or regulating the employment in mines or in any class of mine of women either below ground or in special kinds of dangerous work ; and it was in virtue of this power that the regulations providing for the gradual elimination of the underground employment of women were issued.

Power to make rules in regard to sanitation and various questions of employment, registers, notices, etc. was granted to Local Governments, who could also make rules for the appointment of chairmen and members of Mining Boards and for regulating the procedure of such Boards, and for the appointment of courts of enquiry into accidents. In exercise of these powers almost all the Provincial Governments concerned, i.e. Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the Central Provinces, and Madras, made rules under the Act. These powers have now passed to the Central Government.

Among the powers of inspectors is that of requiring mine managements to frame draft by-laws, consistent with the Act and the regulations and rules in force, for the control and guidance of persons acting in the management of or employed in the mine ; these by-laws are to be such as the owner, agent or manager may deem necessary to prevent accident and provide for the safety, convenience and discipline of persons employed in the mine ; as approved by Local Governments, the by-laws have effect as if enacted in the Act. In 1936 such by-laws had been approved for 606 coal mines and 20 other mines.¹

In addition to the Chief Inspector of Mines and the inspectors

¹ *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India, 1936, p. 44.*

appointed by the Governor-General in Council, it is provided in the Mines Act that district magistrates may exercise the powers and perform some of the duties of inspectors, subject to the general and special orders of Government. The full-time inspection staff in 1936 consisted of the Chief Inspector of Mines and 10 other inspectors. Following a recommendation of the Royal Commission on Labour, two posts of assistant inspectors have recently been created; moreover, with a view to securing expert inspection relating to the health of employees in mines, provincial and district medical and public health officers, whose jurisdiction covers mining areas, have been appointed inspectors of mines.¹

Of 1,973 mines working under the scope of the Mines Act in 1936, 1,071 or over one-half of the total were inspected, the total number of separate inspections amounting to 3,378.² The work of the inspectors included investigation into the causes and circumstances of nearly all fatal accidents and all important serious accidents, as well as complaints of breaches of regulations and rules. Inspections were also undertaken at the invitation of the mines desirous of obtaining advice on safety matters. Moreover, inspectors were often called upon to investigate the causes of actual or threatened damage to dwelling houses and roads by reason of subsidence above the underground workings of coal mines and in dealing with underground fires.³

The functions of the Mining Boards which may be set up under the Mines Act are as follows : (1) the draft of any regulation made under the Act must be referred to every Mining Board and the draft of any rule to the Mining Board of the province concerned, and such regulations or rules may not be published until each such Board has had a reasonable opportunity of reporting on their expediency and suitability; (2) when there is disagreement between the inspectorate and a mine owner regarding the terms of by-laws, the question must be referred for settlement to the Mining Board; (3) a Court of Law may decide that a case brought before it by the inspectorate should more properly be investigated by a Mining Board and report the case to the Government for reference to the Board; provision is also made for such

¹ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : Department of Industries and Labour, Notification, M-1265, 20 April 1933.

² Compiled from *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1936, pp. 57 and 122.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

cases to be referred to a Committee instead of to a Mining Board, such Committee to consist of a chairman nominated by the Government, an expert nominated by the chairman and two persons representing the interests of the mine management and the workers respectively. In practice, the activities of the Mining Boards have been limited to the duties defined under (1) above.

In carrying out their duties, Mining Boards may exercise such powers of an inspector under the Act as they think necessary or expedient for the purpose of deciding upon any matter referred to them. Such Boards have also the power of a Civil Court under the Code of Civil Procedure of 1908 for the purpose of enforcing the attendance of witnesses and compelling the production of documents and material objects.

In cases of accidents, Government may appoint a competent person to be a court of enquiry and may also appoint experts as assessors to assist the court. As already noted, in accordance with a recommendation of the Royal Commission on Labour, the publication of the reports of courts of enquiry has been made obligatory by the Act of 1935.

The number of prosecutions for breaches of the provisions of the Mining Act in 1936 was 57, involving 93 persons, of whom 83 were convicted.¹

4. — Communications

Legislation relating to conditions of work in communications in India is limited to railways and port services.

THE INDIAN RAILWAYS ACT

Except in respect of railway workshops, which are covered by the Indian Factories Act, the conditions of work of Indian railway servants were, until recently, wholly determined by administrative decision of the Railway Board as regards State railways and of the boards of directors as regards privately-owned railways. This situation was modified in 1930, in regard to the regulation of hours of work and rest, by the passing of the Indian Railways (Amendment) Act, which added a new Chapter VIA

¹ *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India, 1936*, p. 202.

(limitation of employment of railway servants) to the Railways Act of 1890.

It will be remembered that the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919, provided in its Article 10 for the adoption of the principle of a 60-hour week in India " in such branches of railway work as shall be specified for this purpose by the competent authority ", and that the Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921, also provided for the application of the weekly rest in India within the same limits as those laid down in the Hours Convention. Until 1930 the application of these Conventions, ratified in 1921 and 1923 respectively by the Government of India, was partially ensured by administrative action. It was to secure a statutory obligation to apply the provisions of these Conventions to railways that the Act of 1930 was passed. ¹

The provisions introduced into the Railways Act by the Amending Act of 1930 apply to such railway servants or classes of railway servants as the Governor-General in Council may by rules prescribe. The hours of work of such railway servants, other than those whose work has been declared to be essentially intermittent on the ground that it involves long periods of inaction, may not be employed for more than 60 hours a week on the average in any month ; railway servants whose work is essentially intermittent may not be employed for more than 84 hours in any week. Provision is made for temporary exceptions to these limitations in cases of emergency and exceptional pressure of work, subject to the payment of an overtime rate of one-and-a-quarter times the ordinary rate of pay. A weekly rest of not less than 24 consecutive hours is to be granted, each week commencing on Sunday, to railway servants covered by the Act, with the exception of those whose work is essentially intermittent or to whom, under rules made by the Governor-General in Council, prescribed periods of rest on a scale less than the above may be granted.

The power to make rules under the Act is granted to the Governor-General in Council and, in exercise of this power, the Railway Servants' Hours of Employment Rules of 1931 were issued. ² These rules provide for the limitation of hours of work and for the grant of periodical rests to certain classes of railway servants, but exclude from their operation : (a) running staff,

¹ Indian Railways (Amendment) Act, No. XIV of 1930. *Legislative Series*, 1930, Ind. 1.

² *Gazette of India*, 1 January 1931, Part IV.

namely, drivers, guards and others who habitually work on running trains; (b) watchmen, watermen, sweepers and gatekeepers whose employment may be declared to be intermittent and of a specially light character; (c) persons in positions of supervision or management or in confidential employment; (d) persons employed in factories or mines coming within the scope of the Factories and Mines Acts.¹ Exceptions to the weekly rest provisions are made for the permanent way and engineering works staff, who are granted one period of rest of not less than 48 consecutive hours or two periods of not less than 24 hours in every month.

The coming into force of the Act in respect of any particular railway depends on the publication of a notification to that effect by the Governor-General in Council. Such notifications have been issued directing that the Act should come into force in respect of the North Western, East Indian, Great Indian Peninsula, Eastern Bengal, Bombay, Baroda and Central India, and Madras and Southern Mahratta Railways. All the State-managed railways, and two of the largest company-managed systems, are now within the scope of the Act; they employ the majority of the workers to whom the Act could be applied. It should also be noted that, although the provisions of the 1930 Act have not yet been extended to all the company-managed railways, most of their employees are believed to be working within the restricted limits laid down in the Act.²

For the inspection of the application of the Act of 1930 and the rules made thereunder, the Act empowers the Governor-General in Council to appoint supervisors of railway labour. Under this provision, a Supervisor of Railway Labour was appointed with effect from 1 April 1931; he is assisted by a staff of 10 inspectors. In carrying out their duties, the inspectors have been instructed to rectify breaches of the Act and rules on the spot, where this can be done in collaboration with the local supervising authorities, and this method has been found highly satisfactory.³

¹ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, Railway Department: *Annual Report on the Working of the Hours of Employment Regulations on the North Western and East Indian Railways*, 1931-1932, p. 22.

² *Annual Report on the Working of the Hours of Employment Regulations on the North Western, East Indian, Eastern Bengal, Great Indian Peninsula, Bombay, Baroda and Central India, and Madras and Southern Mahratta Railways*, 1936-1937, pp. 1-2.

³ *Report by Railway Board on Indian Railways*, 1931-1932, p. 57.

For the purposes of inspection, the various branches of railway work are grouped in four categories : (1) transportation establishments, consisting of station staff, each station being regarded as one establishment ; (2) way and works establishments, or those under permanent way inspectors and inspectors of works ; (3) power, carriage and wagon establishments, consisting of locomotive shed staff, etc. ; and (4) miscellaneous establishments consisting of medical, watch and ward, office staff, etc. In 1936-1937, 5,070 such establishments employing 477,801 persons were inspected.¹

THE INDIAN PORTS ACT

Until 1934 the only provisions relating to labour in Indian ports were contained in the Indian Ports Act. First enacted in 1889, this Act and subsequent amendments were consolidated by Act XV of 1908, which was further amended in 1922 and 1931. Up to 1922 the provisions for the regulation of labour conditions were confined to the empowering of Local Governments to regulate the employment of persons engaged in cleaning or painting vessels, or in working in the bilges, boilers or double bottoms of vessels in port. By the amending Act of 1922 Local Governments were required to frame rules prohibiting the employment of children under 12 years of age upon the handling of goods at piers, jetties, landing-places, wharves, quays, docks, warehouses and sheds.² This amendment did not, however, prevent the employment of children below the prescribed age in coaling ships, and this object was achieved by the amending Act of 1931, which prohibited the employment of children under 12 years of age in handling goods anywhere within the ports to which the Act applies.³

Considering that work in handling goods in ports is unsuitable for children and a system of half-time working is not practicable, the Royal Commission on Labour recommended that the minimum age for employment of children in ports should be

¹ *Annual Report on the Working of the Hours of Employment Regulations, etc.*, 1936-1937, pp. 3-4.

² Act No. XV of 1922. *Legislative Series*, 1922, Ind. 3.

³ Act No. XI of 1931 — an Act further to amend the Indian Ports Act, 1908, for certain purposes.

raised to 14 years, and that the factory inspectors should be entrusted with securing the observance of the law in this respect.¹ The Commission also considered that the limitation of hours of work of dockers is necessary and recommended that the normal daily hours prescribed by the law should be fixed at 9, but that overtime should be allowed up to a maximum of 3 additional hours on any one day, subject to the payment of overtime at an increased rate of at least $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. over the ordinary rates. On 3 November 1932 the Government of India addressed a circular letter to all Local Governments controlling major or minor ports, asking their opinion on the question.²

THE INDIAN DOCK LABOURERS ACT, 1934

This Act, which is the most important legislative measure yet adopted in India for the protection of port workers, was passed specifically to give effect to the Protection against Accidents (Dockers) Convention (Revised), 1932.³ The Act provides that the Governor-General in Council may make regulations :

- (a) for the safety of working places on shore and of any regular approaches over a dock, wharf or quay or other similar premises which workers have to use for going to or from a working place at which the loading and unloading of cargo or fuel are carried on and for the lighting and fencing of such places and approaches ;
- (b) prescribing the nature of the means of access to a ship ;
- (c) prescribing the measures to be taken to ensure the safe transport of workers to a ship by water ;
- (d) prescribing the nature of the means of access from the dock to the hold of a ship ;
- (e) prescribing the measures to be taken to protect hatchways and other dangerous openings ;
- (f) for the efficient lighting of means of access ;
- (g) for the safety of workers engaged in removing or replacing hatch coverings and beams ;
- (h) for the safety of hoisting gear ;

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 189.

² *Labour Gazette*, Bombay, March 1933, pp. 529-530.

³ Indian Dock Labourers Act, No. XIX of 1934. *Legislative Series*, 1934, Ind. 1.

- (i) for the fencing of machinery, etc. ;
- (j) for regulating safety appliances on derricks, etc. ;
- (k) for precautions in regard to exhaust and live steam ;
- (l) for the employment of competent and reliable persons to operate lifting and transporting machinery ;
- (m) for safety in stacking and handling cargo ;
- (n) for facilitating the escape of workers from the hold, etc. ;
- (o) precautions in the use of stages and trucks ;
- (p) precautions in handling dangerous goods ;
- (q) for the rendering of first-aid to injured persons and removal to the nearest place of treatment ;
- (r) rescue from drowning ;
- (s) prescribing abstracts of the Act and regulations ;
- (t) notices of accidents, etc. ;
- (u) specifying the persons and authorities responsible for compliance with the regulations made under the Act ;
- (v) defining exemptions ;
- (w) defining additional powers of inspectors ;
- (x) providing generally for the safety of workers.

Government may make rules regarding inspection and may appoint suitable persons to be inspectors for the purposes of the Act within local limits. In addition, all principal officers of the Merchant Marine Department are inspectors under the Act, *ex officio*, within the limits of their charges. The Act also provides penalties extending to Rs.500 for certain offences against its provisions and fixes a time limit of six months within which a prosecution may be preferred in the case of an alleged offence. ¹

5. — Other Legislation

Besides the above legislation enacted for the regulation of labour conditions in the main branches of industry in accordance with the particular needs of each branch, a series of Acts has been passed in recent years which may be divided into (1) legislation which is applicable to bodies of workers, irrespective of the industry in which they are employed, and (2) legislation which is intended mainly for promoting the welfare of the workers. Although most of these measures have been enacted by the Central

¹ *Gazette of India*, 25 August 1934, Part IV, pp. 55-57.

Legislature, some of them fall within the category of provincial legislation ; they relate mainly to employment of children, maternity benefit, payment and protection of wages, workmen's compensation, trade unionism, industrial disputes and industrial housing.

THE CHILDREN (PLEDGING OF LABOUR) ACT, 1933

No measures have yet been taken by the Central Legislature in India in regard to the employment of children on plantations, in non-regulated factories and in non-industrial occupations. The Royal Commission on Labour recommended that the age for admission of children to employment on plantations and in non-regulated factories should be fixed at 10 years,¹ and, as recorded above, this has been done in the Central Provinces in the case of non-regulated factories.

Legislative action has also been taken to suppress the system of mortgaging the labour of children in accordance with the Commission's recommendation. This system, which consists in the making to parents or guardians of loans or advances on agreement, either written or oral, in return for the labour of their children, was found by the Commission to exist in several industries (e.g. Amritsar carpet factories and *bidi* factories) and it recommended strong measures to eradicate the evil.² It was for this purpose that the Children (Pledging of Labour) Act was passed in 1933.³

In virtue of this Act, any agreement to pledge the labour of a child is void, an " agreement to pledge the labour of a child " being defined as an agreement, written or oral, expressed or implied, whereby the parent or guardian in return for any payment or benefit undertakes to cause or allow the services of a person under 15 years of age to be utilised in any employment, provided that an agreement made without detriment to a child, and not made in consideration of any benefit other than reasonable wages to be paid for the child's services, and terminable at not more than a week's notice, is not an agreement within the

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 101 and 415.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 96-98 and 102.

³ No. II of 1933 ; *Legislative Series*, 1933, Ind. 1. See also *Legislative Assembly Debates*, 1 and 6 February 1933.

meaning of the definition. Parents or guardians making an agreement to pledge a child are liable to punishment with fine which may extend to Rs.50, and employers taking part in the pledging, or employing children whose labour has been pledged, may be punished with fine which may extend to Rs.200. The Act came into operation immediately, with the exception of the penal clauses, which were put into force on 1 July 1933.

MATERNITY BENEFIT ACTS

Up to the present, legislation for the protection of women in childbirth has been treated as a provincial subject.

When the Childbirth Convention, 1919, was adopted by the International Labour Conference at Washington a resolution was passed asking the Government of India to make a study of the question of the employment of women before and after childbirth, and of maternity benefits, and to report to the Conference.¹ In pursuance of this resolution the Government of India consulted Local Governments, medical and welfare authorities, and employers, and a report was laid before the 1921 Session of the International Labour Conference. The general conclusions of the enquiry were that it would not be possible to apply the Convention in India owing to the impossibility of enforcing the compulsory periods of absence from work, the shortage of medical women who would be necessary for issuing medical certificates, the impracticability of compulsory contribution schemes to provide benefits and the absence of need for provisions regarding nursing periods and for the protection of women from loss of employment during pregnancy. Nevertheless, the majority of the provincial Governments agreed to endeavour to persuade employers to start voluntary benefit schemes and to assist them financially. Arrangements by Local Governments for providing medical aid by women doctors to women workers in childbirth were also reported.²

Further enquiries into the question of maternity benefit schemes were made by the Governments of Bombay and Bengal and these were followed in 1924 by an enquiry by the Government

¹ *Final Record of the International Labour Conference*, 1919, p. 277.

² *Ibid.*, 1921, Part II, pp. 1134-1165.

of India.¹ Mention may also be made of a private member's Bill which was introduced into the Legislative Assembly in 1924. This Bill, which sought to prevent the employment of women in factories, mines and tea estates immediately before and after confinement and to provide for the payment of benefit during the period of confinement, was not accepted by the Government of India on the ground that the necessity for such a measure had not yet been established, that the principle of the Bill was questionable and that the results of the measure might be harmful to women workers.²

The first measure of provincial legislation was the Bombay Maternity Benefit Act of 1929,³ and this was followed by the passing of an Act in the Central Provinces in 1930.⁴

It was at this period that the Royal Commission on Labour enquired into the question of maternity benefit, as a result of which it recommended that legislation should be enacted throughout India on the lines of the Bombay and Central Provinces Acts, that such legislation should apply to women employed full time in non-seasonal factories covered by the Factories Act, that the scheme should be non-contributory, the entire cost of benefit being borne at first by the employers, but in the event of any general scheme of social insurance being adopted, maternity benefits should be incorporated and the cost shared by the State, the employer and the worker, that the maximum benefit period should be four weeks before and four weeks after childbirth and the qualifying period not less than nine months or a year, that benefit should be closely linked to treatment, and that administration should be entrusted as far as possible to women factory inspectors. The Commission also recommended legislation providing maternity benefit for women on plantations.⁵

With a view to giving effect to some of these recommendations as well as to amend other provisions of the existing Act, the Government of Bombay passed the Bombay Maternity Benefit

¹ *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 32, Indian Maternity Benefit Schemes, pp. 1-21.

² A. G. CLOW : *The State and Industry*, p. 163.

³ Bombay Maternity Benefit Act, No. VII of 1929 ; *Legislative Series*, 1929, Ind. 4. ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Memorandum from the Government of Bombay*, 1929, p. 54.

⁴ The Central Provinces Maternity Benefit Act, No. VI of 1930 ; *Legislative Series*, 1930, Ind. 2. Formal amendments to this Act were made by Act No. XXII of 1935.

⁵ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 263-265, 412.

(Amendment) Act in 1934.¹ A Maternity Benefit Act, based on that of Bombay, was also passed in the Madras Presidency in 1934, and came into force on 1 April 1935;² the Bombay Maternity Benefit Act, 1929, and the rules issued thereunder, were extended, subject to some modifications, to Ajmer-Merwara in 1932;³ and on 1 January 1937, the Chief Commissioner of Delhi brought the Bombay Act into force in the province of Delhi.

The essential features of the Maternity Benefit Acts are the following : (1) all of them relate to women working in factories, and in Madras application is specifically limited to non-seasonal factories; (2) in all cases the entire cost is to be borne by employers; (3) the maximum period for which the benefit is available is eight weeks in Bombay and the Central Provinces, and seven weeks in Madras, being four or three weeks before and four weeks after the birth of the child ; and (4) the amount of benefit is eight annas a day in the Madras Presidency and in the cities of Bombay, Ahmedabad and Karachi in the Bombay Presidency, while in the rest of the Bombay Presidency and in the Central Provinces the benefit is at the average rate of the woman's daily earnings calculated on the wages earned during a period of three months preceding the day on which she is entitled to receive the benefit, or at the rate of eight annas a day, whichever is less ; (5) the woman must have been in the service of the employer, from whom she claims benefit, for nine months, and she must not work in any other place during the period of absence from work ; (6) a woman may not be discharged from her employment during the period of absence from work. As regards the payment of benefit, the Bombay Act provides three alternative methods, any one of which may be adopted by the employer after taking the wishes of the woman concerned into consideration; these alternatives are (1) payment for four weeks on production of medical certificate that confinement is expected within a month and for the remaining four weeks on production of the birth certificate of the child, (2) payment for the period up to delivery on production of birth certificate and remainder after four weeks, (3) payment for the whole benefit period on production of birth certificate within six weeks of delivery.

¹ No. V of 1934; *Legislative Series*, 1934, Ind. 3.

² *Labour Gazette*, July 1933, pp. 835-837 ; September 1933, p. 21 ; *Fort St. George Gazette*, 19 March 1935, Part IV, pp. 47-51.

³ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Third Report*, 1934, p. 8.

Claims for benefit depending on the production of a birth certificate must be made within six months of delivery.

PAYMENT AND PROTECTION OF WAGES LEGISLATION

There has been much discussion in recent years of the question of legislation relating to the payment and protection of wages earned by industrial workers. The purposes of such legislation would be to secure : (1) prompt payment of, and regulation of deductions from, wages earned, (2) protection against attachment of wages for debt, (3) protection against imprisonment for debt, (4) protection against besetting for collecting debts, and (5) liquidation of unsecured debts.

The most important measures yet taken are contained in the Payment of Wages Act, 1936. The first suggestion for legislation in regard to payment of wages was made in a private member's Bill, called the Weekly Payment Bill, which was brought before the Legislative Assembly in 1925 and which sought to remedy some of the evils of withholding wages, delays in paying wages, and making deductions from wages in respect of fines ; this Bill was withdrawn on the assurance that the question was under consideration by Government. ¹ Enquiries were made by the Bombay Labour Office in 1925 and by the Government of India in 1926, and revealed both a lack of uniformity regarding periods of wage payments in different industries and the existence of abuses both in respect of delays and fines. ² The question also engaged the attention of the Royal Commission on Labour, which made a number of recommendations, on the basis of which the Government of India introduced the Payment of Wages Bill into the Legislative Assembly in 1933. The Bill, however, lapsed, and the Government of India revised the original Bill in the light of the opinions and criticism of Local Governments and Administrations and reintroduced it in 1935. The Act was passed in 1936 and came into force in March 1937. ³

The principal provisions of the Act are as follows :

- (1) The Act applies, in the first instance, to the payment of

¹ A. G. CLOW : *The State and Industry*, p. 163 ; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 237.

² *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 34, Periods of Wage Payment, 1925, pp. 1-3 : *Labour Gazette*, January 1925, pp. 491-502.

³ No. IV of 1936 ; *Legislative Series*, 1936, Ind. 1.

wages to persons employed in factories and on railways, but Local Governments are empowered to extend any or all of the provisions to any other industrial establishments or classes of establishments. The Act does not apply to wages which average Rs.200 a month or more.

(2) The periods in respect of which wages are payable must be fixed, and no wage-period may exceed one month. In the case of undertakings employing less than one thousand persons, wages must be paid before the expiry of the seventh day after the period for which they are due, and in other cases before the expiry of the tenth day. Discharged workers must be paid before the expiry of the second working day from the day on which employment is terminated. All payments must be made on a working day, and must be in cash or currency notes, or both.

(3) Deductions from wages may only be of the following kinds: (a) fines, (b) deductions for absence from duty, (c) deductions for damage to or loss of goods or for loss of money where such damage or loss is attributable to neglect or default, (d) deductions for house-accommodation supplied by the employer, (e) deductions for authorised amenities and services supplied by the employer, (f) deductions for recovery of advances or for adjustment of over-payment of wages, (g) deductions of income tax, (h) deductions ordered by a competent jurisdiction, (i) deductions in respect of provident funds, and (j) deductions for payments to co-operative societies or to a scheme of insurance maintained by the Indian Post Office.

Fines may only be imposed for acts and omissions specified in notices approved by the competent authority; they may not be imposed on children under 15 years of age; the total amount of fine may not exceed an amount equal to half-an-anna in the rupee (i.e. one thirty-second part of the wages payable in respect of the wage-period); no fine may be recovered by instalments or after the expiry of sixty days from the day of the act or omission for which it was imposed; fines must be recorded in a register and the sums obtained must be applied to purposes beneficial to the persons employed in the undertaking.

The amount of deductions for absence from duty may not exceed a sum which bears the same proportionate relationship to the wages payable in respect of the wage-period as the period of absence does to such wage-period; except that where ten or more persons acting in concert absent themselves without giving due

notice and without reasonable cause the deduction may include the amount of wages that would have been payable during the period of notice up to a maximum of eight days' wages. By an amending Act, No. XXII of 1937, employers were further empowered to withhold wages in the case of "stay-in" strikes.¹

Deductions for damage or loss may not exceed the amount of the damage or loss to the employer.

Deductions for house accommodation and for amenities and services may only be made when these have been accepted by the worker and may not exceed an amount equivalent to their value.

An advance of money made before employment must be recovered from the first payment of wages; advances for travelling expenses are not recoverable. Amounts and methods of recovery of advances of wages are subject to regulation by Provincial Governments.

(4) Claims on account either of deductions or of delay in the payment of wages are dealt with by a special authority, which has power to order payment to the claimant of the sum wrongfully withheld plus compensation up to ten times the sum in the case of deductions and Rs.10 in the case of delay.

(5) Infringements of the law are liable to prosecution, but such prosecutions cannot be instituted unless a successful claim has been made under the provisions mentioned above, and the authority appointed under those provisions or the appellate court considers a prosecution to be warranted.

The Royal Commission on Labour in India also made recommendations regarding imprisonment for debt. Under section 51 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, any male debtor was liable to be arrested and imprisoned for six months in execution of a decree for the payment of more than Rs.50 and for six weeks in the case of a smaller sum. The Commission understood that the courts of law were reluctant to order imprisonment, and the fact that the creditor had to support the debtor in prison made the former unwilling to secure the detention of a penniless debtor; but the threat of imprisonment was a weapon in the hands of the moneylender. The Commission, therefore, recommended that, in the case of industrial workers in receipt of wages less than

¹ Formal amendments to the Act were made by another amending Act, No. XX of 1937.

Rs.100 a month, arrest and imprisonment for debt should be abolished except where the debtor had been proved to be both able and unwilling to pay.¹ The Government of India consulted Provincial Governments and public opinion on this subject in 1933. In 1934, a Relief of Indebtedness Act was passed in the Punjab (No. VII of 1934) which abolishes imprisonment for debt except when the debtor refuses to pay a sum within his capacity from such property as is liable to attachment. The next step was taken by the Government of India which introduced, in 1935, a Bill to amend the Code of Civil Procedure. The Act, which was passed in 1936 (Act No. XXI of 1936) prevents the imprisonment of debtors except where the debtor is likely to obstruct or delay execution of an order of the Court by leaving the area of the Court's jurisdiction, where there has been a dishonest transfer of property, where the debtor is able to pay from assets liable to attachment, or where the debtor is liable in a fiduciary capacity; the Act is not limited to industrial workers, but applies to all judgment-debtors.

Another question to which the Royal Commission drew attention is that of attachment of wages. Under section 60 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, a moneylender can secure the attachment of the wages of any person who is not a labourer or a domestic servant — the majority of workers in organised industries not being held to be labourers in the sense of this provision — and can use the employer as his debt collector. In particular, in regard to railway servants and the employees of local authorities — and sometimes to workers in private employment — the moneylender can secure an order requiring the employer to recover from the debtor's wages an amount equal to half the wages or an amount by which the wage exceeds Rs.20, whichever is less, until the debt is discharged. The Commission recommended that the wages and salaries of workmen receiving less than Rs.300 a month should be entirely exempted from attachment.²

With a view to giving effect to these recommendations, a private Bill was introduced into the Legislative Assembly on 24 March 1933.³ This Bill was not proceeded with and the

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 232.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 231-232.

³ *Gazette of India*, 1 April 1933, Part V, pp. 66-67.

Government of India, on 18 February 1935,¹ introduced a new Bill further to amend section 60 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, for certain purposes.² This measure proposed that salaries, not exceeding Rs.100 a month, of all workers should be totally exempt from attachment, that the pay of servants of Government, railway companies and local authorities receiving more than Rs.100 a month should be exempt to the extent of the first Rs.100 and one-half of the remainder, and that, while the attachable portion of the pay of servants of Government, railway companies and local authorities should remain as at present liable to continuous attachment, the period of attachment should be so restricted that after a debtor's pay has been attached for a total period of two years (in one or more periods) no further attachment should be possible in favour of the same decree or in favour of any other decree until twelve months have elapsed. The Bill was passed in February 1937 and became Act No. IX of 1937. It applies only to decrees obtained on or after 1 June 1937.

Instead, however, of taking legal proceedings for the recovery of the debts, many moneylenders use intimidation or even violence. The Royal Commission on Labour found that there were "many moneylenders who prey upon workers and depend upon the threat of violence rather than of the processes of the law. The *lathi* is the only court to which they appeal, and they may be seen waiting outside the factory gate on pay-day ready to pounce on their debtors as they emerge." The ordinary criminal law does not contain any provision making such besetting an offence, and the Royal Commission recommended that besetting an industrial establishment for the recovery of debts should be made a criminal and cognisable offence, and defined besetting as "loitering within the precincts or near or within the sight of any gate or outlet of the establishment."³

This recommendation of the Commission was incorporated in a private member's Bill, which was introduced into the Legislative Assembly on 24 March 1933, and which sought to amend the Indian Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, with a view to making besetting a criminal offence;⁴ but before this Bill was proceeded with further, the Government of India

¹ *Legislative Assembly Debates*, 18 February 1935, p. 939.

² *Gazette of India*, 23 February 1935, Part V, pp. 25-26.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 235-236.

⁴ *Gazette of India*, 1 April 1933, Part V, p. 61.

consulted Local Governments and came to the conclusion that central legislation on the subject was not called for.¹

The question of legislation relating to besetting has since been under consideration by some Provincial Governments, and, in 1934, at the suggestion of the Government of India, an Act to prevent the recovery of debts from certain classes of workmen by besetting their places of work was passed in Bengal.²

The Bengal Workmen's Protection Act provides that whoever loiters in or near any (a) mine, (b) dock, wharf, or jetty, (c) railway station or yard, or (d) factory, with a view to recovering any debt from any workmen employed therein is to be liable to punishment with imprisonment which may extend to six months, or with fine, or both. The Act applies, in the first instance, to Calcutta and the districts of 24 parganas, Hooghly and Howrah, but the Local Government, by notification in the *Calcutta Gazette*, may extend its scope to any other specified area.

Another Act of the same character but of wider scope was passed in the Central Provinces in November 1936 and came into force in March 1937.³

The Royal Commission on Labour further recommended legislation relating to the liquidation of unsecured debts due from workmen. "Much of the present misery", the Commission reported, "is due to the readiness of the moneylender to enter into contracts which he knows the debtor cannot fulfil, or at best can fulfil only by suffering severe and prolonged hardship... The assistance of the law should be restricted to the recovery of such sums as the borrower can reasonably repay in a limited period of time." The Commission therefore proposed that, on the presentation of an application by a workman giving a statement of his debts and creditors and assets, the Court should estimate the workman's assets, his probable earnings and reasonable expenditure for the maintenance of himself and his family during the ensuing two years, and should make an order to pay based on the difference between the two amounts; the order should be executed in the usual way, but should not be valid for more than three years.

The Government of India examined the possibility of intro-

¹ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Third Report*, 1934, p. 25.

² Act No. IV of 1935 ; *Legislative Series*, 1935, Ind. 4.

³ Central Provinces Protection of Debtors Act, No. IV of 1937.

ducing experimental legislation of this type applicable to the Province of Delhi in the first instance, but no legislative measures were taken as it was thought that the legislation regarding attachment of wages would afford fuller protection than the liquidation proposals. The scheme prepared for Delhi was, however, followed to a considerable extent in a Bill introduced in the Central Provinces in 1935. This Bill was passed in 1936 as the Central Provinces Adjustment and Liquidation of Industrial Workers' Debt Act, No. V of 1936. The Act is applicable to industrial workers receiving not more than Rs.50 a month in such areas as the Local Government may direct; it was brought into force in certain areas on 1 January 1937. On application by a workman, whose debts exceed his assets plus three months' wages, the Court ascertains the true amount of the debt after reducing usurious rates of interest in accordance with the principle that the aggregate of interest may not exceed the principal of the debt, and fixes the amount which the borrower can repay within a reasonable time by reference to the worker's wages and the number of his dependants; the amount of the worker's wages he may be required to pay varies from one-sixth to one-third and payments may extend over 36 months.¹

THE WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION ACT

Although the question of workmen's compensation in the case of fatal or serious accidents was first raised in India in 1884,² and the importance of enacting workmen's compensation legislation was urged by factory and mining inspectors as a method of creating a greater sense of responsibility among employers and thus of securing more adequate provision for safety, no legislative measures were taken until 1922, when a new section 43A was inserted in the Indian Factories Act giving power to a criminal court to order the whole or part of a fine imposed in respect of an offence causing bodily injury or death to be paid as compensation to the injured person or, in the case of death, to his legal representative.³ The Government of India had, however, already

¹ *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 61: Indian Labour Legislation, 1932-1937, pp. 19-20.

² GREAT BRITAIN: *Parliamentary Papers*, 1890-1891, Vol. 59, H. of C., 86, p. 110.

³ Indian Factories (Amendment) Act, No. II of 1922.

decided in 1920 to initiate legislation for workmen's compensation and, after due consultation with the Local Governments and employers' and workers' associations, the Workmen's Compensation Act was passed in 1923.¹

The main provisions of this Act were as follows :

(1) *Scope.* — The Act was not general in its scope, but applied with certain exceptions to railway servants and to persons employed either by way of manual labour or on monthly wages not exceeding Rs.300 on tramway services, in factories as defined in the Indian Factories Act, in mines as defined in the Indian Mines Act, on loading, unloading or coaling ships at docks, etc., where mechanical power was used, in the construction, repair or demolition of certain types of buildings and bridges, on telegraph or telephone lines and posts or overhead electric cables, in connection with sewers and in fire brigade services. The Act further applied to certain specified occupational diseases, and the Governor-General in Council was empowered to extend its application to other such diseases as well as to hazardous occupations.

(2) *Title to compensation.* — Workmen coming within the scope of the Act were entitled to compensation from the employer in case of personal injury caused by accident arising out of and in the course of the employment, provided that the incapacity lasted more than ten days and that the injury was not caused by the fault of the workmen (i.e. drunkenness, wilful disobedience to an order expressly given, or to a rule expressly framed, to ensure safety, wilful removal or disregard of safety appliances).

(3) *Amount of compensation.* — The Act distinguished between death, permanent total disablement, permanent partial disablement and temporary disablement. In the case of the death of an adult, his dependants (defined as a wife, husband, parent, minor son, unmarried daughter, married daughter who was a minor, minor brother or unmarried sister, minor children of a deceased son, and, where no parent was alive, a paternal grandparent) were to receive a sum equal to thirty months' wages or Rs.2,500, whichever was less ; in the case of the death of a minor (i.e. a person under 15 years of age), the compensation was Rs.200. For permanent total disablement the compensation was,

¹ Act No. VIII of 1923. *Legislative Series*, 1923, Ind. 1. For subsequent amendments, see *Legislative Series*, 1926, Ind. 3 and 1929, Ind. 3.

for an adult, a sum equal to forty-two months' wages or Rs.3,500, whichever was less, and, for a minor, a sum equal to eighty-four months' wages or Rs.3,500, whichever was less. Compensation for permanent partial disablement was payable according to the percentage of loss of earning capacity. Temporary disablement, whether total or partial, was compensated by half-monthly payments during the disablement or during a period of five years, whichever period was shorter, of Rs.15 or a sum equal to one-fourth of his monthly wages, whichever was less, in the case of an adult, and, in the case of a minor, of a sum equal to one-third or, after he reached 15 years of age, to one-half of his monthly wages but not exceeding Rs.15.

(4) *Administration.* — The administration of the Act was placed in the hands of provincial Commissioners for Workmen's Compensation, and was to be exercised in accordance with the provisions of the Act and of rules made thereunder by the Governor-General in Council or by Local Governments. The duties of the Commissioners were very extensive and included, for instance, the reception and settlement of claims to compensation not settled by agreement, the revision of periodical payments, and the apportionment of compensation to dependants in cases where the injury resulted in death and in certain other cases.

The Act of 1923 has been several times amended or extended by notification of the Governor-General in Council, and further amendments were proposed by the Royal Commission on Labour in India.¹ In particular, the Commission recommended that the Act should be extended to cover as completely as possible the workers in organised industry and should be gradually extended to workers in less organised employment, beginning with those who are subject to most risk.

This and other recommendations of the Royal Commission were taken into consideration by the Central Government and Legislature, which, in 1933, passed a Workmen's Compensation (Amendment) Act.² This Act came into force in respect of some of its provisions on 1 January 1934, and in respect of the remainder on 1 July 1934. It amended the 1923 Act (as subsequently modified) in the following respects :

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 295-315.

² Act No. XV of 1933. *Legislative Series*, 1933, Ind. 2.

(1) *Scope.* — The Act extends widely the scope of the original Act. It now applies as before to railway servants and to persons employed on monthly wages not exceeding Rs.300 in connection with mechanically propelled vehicles (except as clerks); in factories (except as clerks) employing ten or more persons and using mechanical power, and in any factories employing fifty or more persons; in undertakings in which explosives are manufactured or handled and in which ten or more persons are employed; in mines as defined in the Indian Mines Act and (except as clerks) in any work of a mining character in which 50 or more persons are employed, which is more than 20 feet deep and in which explosives are used; in the loading, unloading, fuelling, constructing, repairing, demolishing, cleaning or painting of a ship, and in the handling and transport of goods within the limits of a port subject to the Indian Ports Act; in the construction, repair or demolition of certain buildings, dams, roads, bridges, tunnels, wharfs, etc.; on telegraph or telephone lines or posts and in connection with overhead electric cables; in connection (except as clerks) with aerial rope-ways, canals, pipelines or sewers; in fire brigades; in work done on railways through contractors; in certain kinds of work in the Railway Mail Service and in outdoor postal work; in oilfields (except as clerks); in blasting operations; in making excavations over 20 feet deep and on which more than 50 persons are employed; on ferry-boats; on cinchona, coffee, rubber and tea estates (except as clerks) where 25 or more persons are employed; in electricity and gas works (except as clerks); in lighthouses; in the production or exhibition of cinematograph pictures; in connection with elephants or wild animals; as divers. The Governor-General in Council may add to this list any class of persons employed in a hazardous occupation. As a result of this change in the scope of the Act it is estimated that the number of workers covered has been increased from four to six million.

(2) *Title to compensation.* — Workmen are now entitled to compensation for injuries resulting in disablement for more than seven days instead of ten days, and the provision disqualifying workmen for compensation in respect of accidents due to their fault is amended to exclude fatal accidents.

(3) *Amount of compensation.* — The provisions relating to the amounts of compensation have been amended both to increase

the rates and to define more precisely the amounts due at different wage levels. In the event of the death of an adult the rate varies from a minimum of Rs.500 to a maximum of Rs.4,000 ; compensation for the death of a minor remains at Rs.200. For permanent total disablement of an adult, the rates range between Rs.700 and Rs.5,600 ; in the case of a minor, the sum payable is Rs.1,200. No change is made in the method of calculating compensation for permanent partial disablement, although the rates, being percentages of the amounts payable for total disablement, are increased. For temporary disablement, an adult, after a waiting period of seven days instead of ten, receives compensation varying from a full wage in the lowest wage class to a maximum of Rs.30 (half-monthly), while a minor receives half his monthly wages subject to a maximum of Rs.30. The rates of compensation for different wage classes are shown in the following table : ¹

Monthly wages of the workman injured		Amount of compensation for :		Half monthly payment as compensation for temporary disablement of adult
		Death of adult	Permanent total disablement of adult	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	
More than Rs.	But not more than Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs. Annas
0	10	500	700	his monthly wages
10	15	550	770	5 0
15	18	600	840	6 0
18	21	630	882	7 0
21	24	720	1,008	8 0
24	27	810	1,134	8 8
27	30	900	1,260	9 0
30	35	1,050	1,470	9 8
35	40	1,200	1,680	10 0
40	45	1,350	1,890	11 4
45	50	1,500	2,100	12 8
50	60	1,800	2,520	15 0
60	70	2,100	2,940	17 8
70	80	2,400	3,360	20 0
80	100	3,000	4,200	25 0
100	200	3,500	4,900	30 0
200	—	4,000	5,600	30 0

(4) *Dependants.* — The definition of dependants is amended to include a wife, a minor legitimate son, and unmarried legitimate daughter, or a widowed mother ; and, if wholly or partly

¹ Schedule IV to the Act.

dependent on the earnings of a workman at the time of his death, a husband, a parent other than widowed mother, a minor illegitimate son, an unmarried illegitimate daughter, a daughter legitimate or illegitimate if married and a minor or if widowed, a minor brother, an unmarried or widowed sister, a widowed daughter-in-law, a minor child of a deceased son, or, where no parent is alive, a paternal grandparent.

(5) *Other amendments.* — Of the other important amendments made in the Act, two are of interest as having relation to the Workmen's Compensation (Occupational Diseases) Convention, 1925, and the Equality of Treatment (Accident Compensation) Convention, 1925, both of which have been ratified in respect of British India. As regards the first, an amendment to the schedule of occupational diseases adds to lead and phosphorus poisoning processes resulting in mercury poisoning or its sequelae, poisoning by benzene and homologues or the sequelae of such poisoning, chrome ulceration or its sequelae, and compressed air illness or its sequelae.¹ The second amendment empowers the Governor-General in Council to make rules for the transfer of compensation to a foreign country in case of a person residing abroad, and also for the receipt and administration of compensation awarded under the law of a foreign country for the benefit of a person residing in British India.²

Since the coming into force of the amending Act, the Governor-General in Council has made use of his powers to extend the application of the Act to hazardous occupations by ratifying the inclusion of operations connected with the felling and logging of trees, the transport of timber by inland waterway, the controlling or extinguishing of forest fires, and elephant catching operations.³

The Government of India has not yet considered it feasible to introduce any other form of social insurance. During the discussion in the Indian Legislature of the Sickness Insurance (Industry, etc.) Convention, 1927, and the Sickness Insurance (Agri-

¹ Further additions have been made by Notification by the Central and Provincial Governments; see *Legislative Series*, 1937, Ind. 2. All the powers of the Central Government under the Act have now been transferred to Provincial Governments.

² Further amended by Act No. VII of 1937. *Legislative Series*, 1937, Ind. 4.

³ DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIES AND LABOUR: Notification No. L-3002, dated 22 July 1934.

culture) Convention, 1927, the Government drew attention to the following circumstances which made the application of these Conventions impossible in India : (1) the migratory character of labour ; (2) the workers' habit of going home whenever they are seriously ill instead of submitting themselves to treatment in industrial centres ; (3) the lack of a sufficient number of qualified medical practitioners ; (4) the existence of indigenous systems of treatment ; (5) the opposition of the workers to compulsory deductions from their pay ; and (6) the absence of self-governing institutions such as trade unions for the administration of insurance.

Similarly, the Government of India were unable to recommend ratification of the 1933 Conventions relating to old-age, invalidity and survivors' insurance in consequence of the administrative and financial difficulties involved in applying such Conventions in a country where the number of beneficiaries would amount to over 40 millions of old and incapacitated people, widows and orphans.¹

THE TRADE UNIONS ACT

With the growth of labour organisations, the need arose for legislation guaranteeing their existence and protecting their interests. In 1920 there was a case in which a union leader at Madras was prosecuted and put under injunction for conducting a strike which was alleged to have induced workmen to break their contract with employers, and, although the prosecution was withdrawn, the proceedings drew attention to the impediments which trade union action might encounter in the existing state of the law.²

The first step towards the enactment of trade union legislation was taken on 1 March 1921 when a resolution calling for such legislation was moved in the Legislative Assembly and, with some amendment, accepted by the Government of India. Acting on this resolution, the Government of India consulted Local Governments and other interested parties, and in 1926 the

¹ *Legislative Assembly Debates*, 23. November 1933, pp. 2083-2108 ; *Council of State Debates*, 14 December 1933, pp. 465-469.

² *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 43, Industrial Disputes in India, 1921-1928, 1930, pp. 3 and 4.

Indian Trade Unions Act was passed ; the Act came into force on 1 June 1927.¹

Under this Act, Local Governments are required to appoint a person to be the registrar of trade unions in the province. The registration of unions is optional, but in order to be registered, unions must comply with various requirements in regard to the drafting of their rules. The Act limits and defines the purposes for which the general funds of a registered union may be spent, and permits the constitution of a separate optional fund for the promotion of the civic and political interests of the union's members ; the accounts of a registered trade union must be audited and a statement forwarded annually to the registrar. It is provided that not less than half of the officers of a registered union must be persons actually engaged or employed in an industry with which the union is connected, but this provision may be declared by Local Governments not to apply to any trade union or class of trade unions. The Act protects officers and members of a registered trade union against criminal proceedings in respect of any agreement for the purpose of furthering any legal object of the union. No civil action can be brought against a union in respect of any act done in contemplation or furthering of a trade dispute on the ground only that such act induces some other person to break a contract of employment or that it is an interference with the trade, business or employment of another person. A union cannot be sued in respect of tortious acts of its agents if committed without the knowledge of, or contrary to express instructions given by, the executive of the union. An agreement between the members of a registered trade union is not void or voidable merely by reason of the fact that any of the objects of the agreement are in restraint of trade.

When the Act came into force, a considerable number of unions were unwilling to register under it, and, in order to extend to such unions the immunity from civil suits and criminal prosecutions guaranteed to registered unions by the Act, a private members' Bill was introduced into the Legislative Assembly in 1928, but was rejected by the Legislature.² In the same year the Act was amended to facilitate the procedure of appeal against

¹ Act No. XVI of 1926. *Legislative Series*, 1926, Ind. 1.

² The Bill was introduced into the Legislative Assembly by Mr. N. M. Joshi on 9 February 1928 and was rejected on 8 September 1928. Cf. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, 1928, Vol. III, No. 4.

decisions of the registrar refusing to register a trade union or withdrawing a certificate of registration.¹

The report of the Royal Commission on Labour found that the Act had helped to give trade unions stability and an enhanced sense of responsibility. It recommended, however, that it should be re-examined in not more than three years' time, and suggested that all the limitations imposed on the activity of registered unions should be reconsidered, it being important to ensure that the conditions attached to registration should not be such as to prevent any well-conducted *bona-fide* union from applying for registration. Meanwhile the Commission recommended that the audit of the accounts of unions should be undertaken free of charge by Government officers, that the minimum number of members of trade union executives who must be actually engaged or employed in the industry to which the union relates should be raised to two-thirds, and that trade unions should not be precluded from initiating and carrying on co-operative societies.²

The first of these recommendations required no legislative action; it can be carried out by regulations and this has been done in some Provinces. The Government of India was favourably disposed to the second suggestion, but thought that it could wait until the Act had to be amended for other purposes as well. The third suggestion was rejected on the ground that it was impracticable for a single body to act as a trade union under the Trade Unions Act and as a co-operative society under the Co-operative Societies Act; there is no legal bar to the formation of a co-operative society by any or all of the members of a trade union.

THE TRADE DISPUTES ACT

Up to 1932 there remained on the statute book an Employers and Workmen (Disputes) Act which was passed in 1860. Its main purpose was to secure the settlement of wages disputes, and for this purpose magistrates were empowered to decide such disputes summarily; it also provided for penal sanctions for breaches of contract by workers. The Labour Commission found that the Act had everywhere ceased to be used, and it was repealed by Act No. II of 1932.

¹ Indian Trade Unions (Amendment) Act, No. XV of 1928. *Legislative Series*, 1928, Ind. 2.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 331-332.

Meanwhile, the expediency of legislation for the settlement of industrial disputes was the subject of investigations by the Governments of Bengal and Bombay in 1921 and 1922, and the Government of India prepared a Bill relating to such disputes in 1924. It was not, however, until 1929 that the Act to make provision for the investigation and settlement of trade disputes and for certain other purposes (Trade Disputes Act, 1929) was passed.¹ It was brought into force on 7 May 1929 and was to remain in force for five years; it was prolonged by an Act passed in April 1934.²

The main object of the Act is to make provision for the establishment of courts of enquiry and boards of conciliation with a view to investigating and settling trade disputes respectively. The Act prohibits strikes or lock-outs without notice in public utility services; it also makes illegal any strike or lock-out which has any object other than the furtherance of a trade dispute within the trade or industry in which the strikers or the employers locking out are engaged, and is designed or calculated to inflict severe, general and prolonged hardship upon the community and thereby to compel Government to take or abstain from any particular course of action.

The Act was examined by the Royal Commission on Labour, which recommended that, when the Act was reconsidered, the question of providing means for the impartial examination of disputes in public utility services and the possibility of establishing permanent courts in the place of *ad hoc* tribunals under the Act should be examined, and that Local Governments should appoint officers to undertake the work of conciliation and to bring the parties privately to agreement.³ The Government of India accepted these recommendations, but did not have sufficient time to examine the suggestions and opinions of Local Governments on the question before it became necessary to prolong the Act. The Act, therefore, remains in force as amended, in accordance with another suggestion of the Royal Commission, in 1932, for the purpose of protecting members of courts of enquiry or of boards of conciliation from prosecution in regard to the disclosure of confidential information relating to trade unions or individual

¹ Act No. VII of 1929. *Legislative Series*, 1929, Ind. 2.

² *Gazette of India*, 5 May 1934, Part IV, p. 45.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 346-348.

businesses.¹ In 1934 the Act was made permanent by Act No. XIII of 1934, and the Government of India undertook to introduce an amending Bill at a later date.

In the same year (1934) an important provincial measure was passed, the Bombay Trade Disputes Conciliation Act, the object of which is to make further provision for the settlement of trade disputes by conciliation and for certain other purposes.² This Act is applicable, in the first instance, to the textile industry in Bombay City and the Bombay suburban district only, but the Local Government may extend its provisions to any industry or to any other part of the Presidency. The Act provides for the appointment of a Government labour officer to look after the interests of labour in the industry and to promote closer contact between employers and workers. It also provides for the creation of a Conciliation Board with the Commissioner of Labour as *ex officio* chief conciliator, and the Government may appoint suitable persons as special or assistant commissioners. If a trade dispute exists or is apprehended, the conciliator may initiate conciliation proceedings with a view to effecting an amicable settlement. The parties to the dispute are to be represented at such proceedings by delegates appointed by them. The labour officer may be appointed as delegate on behalf of the workers, and if the workers fail to appoint a delegate, the labour officer acts in that capacity. The conciliator is given power equal to that of a civil court for the purposes of the Conciliation Board and he may give notice to the parties to a trade dispute to appoint delegates on their behalf. He is also given power to disqualify a person from acting as a delegate, but only after the conciliation proceedings have started. Penalties are provided for obstructing conciliation proceedings. Picketing in respect of a strike while conciliation proceedings are pending is not prohibited, but any picketing against conciliation proceedings themselves is illegal. The Act came into force on 13 October 1934.³

The promised Bill to amend the Trade Disputes Act was introduced in the Central Legislature in 1936, and, after discussion, was circulated for the purpose of eliciting public opinion upon it. The principal amendments proposed related to the appointment of conciliation officers and the revision of the pro-

¹ Act No. XIX of 1932. *Legislative Series*, 1932, Ind. 2.

² Bombay, Act No. IX of 1934. *Legislative Series*, 1934, Ind. 4.

³ *Labour Gazette*, October 1934, p. 87.

visions concerning illegal strikes. The need for conciliation officers had been emphasised by the Labour Commission and confirmed by the working of the Bombay Act mentioned above; the Bill proposed to empower Provincial Governments to appoint such officers either permanently or temporarily and for particular areas or industries, if necessary. As to the provisions of the Act relating to illegal strikes, experience had shown that they were of little practical value, and the Bill proposed that a strike involving or likely to involve serious and prolonged hardship should only be illegal if declared illegal by the Local Government; the dispute would then have to be referred to a court of enquiry or a board of conciliation. Another amendment proposed to include in the scope of the Act disputes between workmen and workmen or between employers and employers. It was also proposed to amend the definition of public utility services to include tramways and inland steamer services.¹

INDUSTRIAL HOUSING LEGISLATION

A great difficulty in improving housing conditions in India in large industrial centres like Bombay and Calcutta is the scarcity of land, and the Royal Commission on Labour recommended that the Land Acquisition Act should be amended to facilitate the acquisition of land by industrial concerns for the housing of their workers. In particular, it suggested that the Act should be so amended as to provide that housing of labour should be deemed to be work likely to prove useful to the public, and that the definition of "company" be so modified as to include industrial concerns owned by individuals or associations of individuals.²

With a view to giving effect to these recommendations an Act amending the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, was passed in 1933.³ Under the original Act, companies which were registered could acquire land compulsorily if the Local Government was satisfied that such land was needed "for the construction of some work" and that "such work is likely to prove useful to the public". As amended the Act enables a company to acquire land compulsorily

¹ *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 61 : Indian Labour Legislation, 1932-1937, p. 26.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 290-291.

³ Act No. XVI of 1933, *Gazette of India*, 16 September 1933, Part IV, p. 34; *Legislative Assembly Debates*, 1 September 1933, pp. 723-724.

also for the purpose of erecting dwelling-houses for its workmen or for providing amenities (e.g. sanitation, sewerage and other services) directly connected therewith. An industrial concern, ordinarily employing not less than 100 workmen and owned by an individual or an association of individuals, is also deemed to be a company so far as concerns the acquisition of land for such purposes. Local Governments are granted powers to ensure that the houses which are to be erected are properly built and used, and also to prescribe the time, condition and manner in which the dwelling-houses or amenities are erected or provided.

CHAPTER IV

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

In the preceding chapter an account has been given of the extent to which the State has intervened by legislative or administrative action in the determination of the conditions of labour of Indian industrial workers. Many questions relating to conditions of employment, however, remain outside the scope of legal regulation and must be settled either directly between the employer or his agents or intermediaries and the worker, or indirectly between employers' and workers' organisations. The nature and development of such organisations in India, and their relations, will be considered in the present chapter.

It will be seen that, while large-scale employers have long been organised in India for various purposes and have constantly been consulted by the Government of India and Local Governments in regard to labour policy, it is only comparatively recently that national organisations have been started more especially for the purpose of industrial relations. Workers' organisations generally are of recent growth, and, taking into account the difficulties encountered owing to lack of education, experience, material means, leadership, etc., it is noteworthy that Indian workers should have succeeded in organising a few stable trade unions in certain industries. Of particular importance both as evidence of the growth of the trade union movement in India and as affording a stimulus to its extension is the fact that some trade unions have received a degree of recognition and that their leaders have been chosen to represent the interests of labour in Provincial Legislatures and in the Central Legislature, as well as at the International Labour Conference. Collective bargaining, however, is still in a very early stage of development.

1. — Employers' Organisations

TYPES OF ASSOCIATIONS

The first organisations of employers in India were associations of Europeans, who were also the pioneers of organised industry, and it is only in recent years that Indian employers have developed strong organisations for furthering their group interests.

At present, employers' organisations in India may roughly be divided into three categories : (1) commercial associations, (2) industrial associations, and (3) employers' associations in the strict sense of the word. As far as questions of labour policy are concerned, there is scarcely any difference between industrial and employers' associations except that, for the former, the treatment of such questions is only one branch of their activities, while the latter have been formed expressly for dealing with labour questions.

The most important commercial associations are the Chambers of Commerce, both European and Indian, which are located in almost all the main commercial centres, and associations of merchants, bankers, shop owners and other business men. The European Chambers of Commerce were the earliest organisations of this type, having been founded, for instance, at Calcutta in 1834, at Bombay and Madras in 1836, at Karachi in 1860, at Rangoon in 1853, and at Cawnpore in 1888. They are described as European Chambers of Commerce, because their membership is mainly European, although Indians are not excluded. In 1920 these Chambers formed a central organisation under the name of the Associated Chambers of Commerce of India and Ceylon.¹

The first Chamber of Commerce organised by the Indian commercial community, exclusively for Indians, was founded at Calcutta in 1887 under the name of the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce. Since then the Chamber has become one of the most influential commercial organisations in Bengal, and many of the leading Indian commercial and industrial firms and persons are members. Another such organisation is the Indian Merchant

¹ C. W. E. Corron, I.C.S. : *Handbook of Commercial Information for India*, second edition, Calcutta, 1934, pp. 34-41. These Chambers of Commerce are provincial or regional in scope ; thus the Chambers in Calcutta and Bombay cover the Provinces of Bengal and Bombay.

Chamber and Bureau of Bombay, which was founded in 1907, and to which most of the leading Indian commercial associations of Bombay are now affiliated. Other Indian commercial associations are the Marwari Chamber of Commerce founded at Calcutta in 1900, the South Indian Chamber of Commerce founded at Madras in 1909, and the Indian Chamber of Commerce founded at Calcutta in 1925.¹

Among other commercial organisations may be mentioned those generally known as trades associations, such as the Calcutta Trades Association and the Madras Trades Association, which represent general retail trade in the principal cities, and the organisations for promoting the interests of a particular trade, such as the Grain Merchants' Association of Bombay and the Hides and Skins Shippers' Association of Calcutta.

The objects and activities of these European and Indian Chambers of Commerce and trade associations are generally the same, except that the latter emphasises the more specifically Indian aspects of commerce and industry. These organisations are not the employers of industrial labour with which this study is concerned, but they have nevertheless a great influence upon the development of the labour policy both of the employers and the Government, and some employers' organisations are actually members of these Chambers.

The next class of employers' organisations is the industrial associations, of which the most important are the Mill Owners' Association founded at Bombay in 1875, the Indian Tea Association founded at Calcutta in 1881, the Indian Jute Mills Association founded at Calcutta in 1884, the Ahmedabad Mill Owners' Association founded in 1891, the Indian Mining Association founded at Calcutta in 1892, and the United Planters' Association of Southern India founded at Madras in 1893. Membership in the Jute Mills Association, the Tea Association and the Mining Association is mostly European ; but the Mill Owners' Associations of Bombay and Ahmedabad are controlled chiefly by Indians, although the former was founded by both European and Indian mill owners.

For the purpose of promoting the interests of Indian indus-

¹ *Indian Year-Book*, 1934-1935, pp. 724-730.

tries exclusively, there have also been started in recent years some associations of Indian owners. Thus the Indian Mining Federation was formed by Indian concerns in 1913, and similar associations have been formed in other industries, such as jute and tea, e.g. the East India Jute Association at Calcutta and the Indian Tea Planters' Association at Jalpaiguri. Moreover, as in the case of European Chambers of Commerce, Indian commercial and industrial associations have also realised the importance of a central organisation with a view to co-ordinating and consolidating their commercial and industrial interests on a national basis, and for this purpose the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry was founded in 1927.¹ In order to take part in international discussions of commerce and industry, they have also joined the International Chamber of Commerce and formed an Indian National Committee, on the roll of which there are 35 commercial bodies as organisation members and 87 commercial firms as associate members.²

The third class of employers' organisations are those associations which have been formed expressly for dealing with labour questions. The most important of such organisations are the Employers' Federation of Southern India founded at Madras in 1920, the All-India Organisation of Industrial Employers founded under the auspices of the Federation of the Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry at Bombay in 1933, and the Employers' Federation of India founded under the auspices of the Bombay Mill Owners' Association on 26 March 1933.³ The membership of the All-India Organisation at the end of the year 1937 consisted of 12 associations,⁴ and 98 industrial concerns. The membership

¹ *Indian Year-Book*, 1934-1935, p. 722.

² *Ibid.*, 1937-1938, p. 677.

³ *Times of India*, 19 April 1935.

⁴ (1) The Indian Salt Association, Bombay; (2) The Indian National Steamship Owners' Association, Bombay; (3) The Indian Sugar Mills Association, Calcutta; (4) The Federation of Baroda State Mills and Industries, Baroda; (5) The Indian Glass Manufacturers' Association, Ogalevadi; (6) The Indian Colliery Owners' Association, Jharia; (7) The Indian Tea Planters' Association, Jalpaiguri; (8) The Indian Mining Federation, Calcutta; (9) The Delhi Factory Owners' Federation, Delhi; (10) The Ahmedabad Mill Owners' Federation, Ahmedabad; (11) The Bengal Mill Owners' Association, Calcutta; (12) The Jute Balers' Association, Calcutta. Cf. ALL-INDIA ORGANISATION OF INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYERS: *Report of the Proceedings of the Committee for the Year 1936-1937*.

of the Employers' Federation of India consists of 14 associations¹ employing over 1.6 million workers.

The founding of these employers' organisations may be attributed, on the one hand, to the increasing employment of industrial labour and the realisation of the need for an employers' labour policy for the country as a whole ; and, on the other hand, to the fact that Indian employers felt it necessary to organise a central body in order to be in a better position to take part in the deliberations of the International Labour Conference.

The chief aims and objects of the Employers' Federation of Southern India are to promote better feeling between employers and employed, to encourage the payment of fair rates of wages, to promote and protect the mutual interests of employers and employed, and particularly to safeguard employers against misguided and unfair action by workers.² The objects of the All-India Organisation of Industrial Employers and of the Employers' Federation of India, the two rival organisations, are, virtually identical ; as stated in a memorandum submitted by the Bombay Mill Owners' Association in 1929 and also at the first meeting of the All-India Organisation of Industrial Employers on 1 April 1934, these objects may be summarised as follows : (1) the establishment of a harmonious relationship between labour and capital ; (2) the securing of proper representation of the interests of their members in the Provincial, Central or Federal Legislatures ; (3) the nomination of delegates and advisers to represent the employers of India at the International Labour Conference.³

INFLUENCE ON LABOUR POLICY

The influence of employers' organisations, including the commercial, industrial and employers' associations described

¹ (1) The Indian Tea Association ; (2) The Indian Jute Mills Association ; (3) The Mill Owners' Association, Bombay ; (4) The United Planters' Association of Southern India ; (5) The Indian Mining Association ; (6) The Indian Engineering Association ; (7) The Employers' Federation of Southern India ; (8) The Indian Metallurgical Association ; (9) The Upper India Chamber of Commerce ; (10) The Indian Sugar Producers' Association ; (11) The Central Provinces and Berar Mining Association ; (12) The Bengal Industries Association ; (13) The Burma-Shell Oil Storage and Distribution Company of India ; (14) The Titaghur Paper Mills Company.

² COTTON, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

³ ALL-INDIA ORGANISATION OF INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYERS : *Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting*, 1934, pp. 5-12 ; *India Year-Book*, 1937-1938, p. 402.

above, on labour policy, is exercised either in the course of their activities for the protection of the interests of industry and commerce, or in their relations with workers.

Most of these associations are represented on official and quasi-official bodies, such as legislatures, municipalities and port trusts. For instance, there are representatives of commercial and industrial Chambers or associations in the Central Legislature, and in the Provincial Councils,¹ and these organisations elect representatives to the municipalities and port trusts of Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and other cities. Besides this permanent representation, there have been employer members on all important public commissions and committees, such as the Industrial Commission of 1916-1918, the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India of 1926-1928, and the Royal Commission on Labour in India of 1929-1931. Moreover, it is usual for the Central Government and Local Governments to consult with and obtain the views of all leading industrial and commercial organisations on questions likely to affect their interests, so that, in the formulation by Government of any policy relating to labour, they can exercise a very great influence.

Apart from their participation in the determination of labour policy as embodied in legislation or administrative regulations, employers' organisations, especially in the most important industries, play an increasingly active part in fixing the conditions of labour in the undertakings of their members. The principal industries of India are now highly organised. Practically all the cotton mill owners in Bombay, for instance, are members of the Bombay Mill Owners' Association, and the majority of the jute mill owners of Calcutta are members of the Indian Jute Mills Association. As regards the tea industry in Assam, the Indian Tea Association, with a branch in each of the two valleys of Assam, represents about 90 per cent. of the total tea cultivation. By controlling production and other means, these associations can influence the labour policy of their members in regard to such matters as recruitment, wages, hours and trade unions.

For instance, until the passing of the Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act, 1932, the control of recruiting for Assam was entrusted to the Assam Labour Board, which was composed of planters' representatives, with an official chairman, and although

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 316.

the work of the Board was guided by the rules made under the Assam Labour and Emigration (Amendment) Act of 1915, the planters were able to exert influence upon the actual working of the Act. In the cotton industry the Bombay Mill Owners' Association, after the strike of 1920, was able to concede a reduction of hours of work to 10 in the day, i.e. before weekly hours of work were reduced to 60 by the Factories (Amendment) Act of 1922. Agreements for short-time working in coal mines and jute mills were also made by the members of the associations in these industries, and, in 1918, the members of the Indian Jute Mills Association adopted the recommendation of its Committee for the payment of an allowance to their workers in respect of enforced short-time working.¹ The tea planters' organisations in Assam enforce what is known as "wage-agreements" among their members, in order to secure, as far as practicable, uniformity in the matter of wages, and to prevent one employer from paying substantially higher wages than his neighbour.² The granting of bonuses or cost-of-living allowances is also determined by the Mill Owners' Associations of Bombay and Ahmedabad.

In industrial disputes, and in the matter of arbitration and conciliation, the employers also present a united front, particularly in the textile industries of Bombay, Calcutta and Ahmedabad. Of especial interest is the initiative taken by the Bombay Mill Owners' Association in the appointment on 1 November 1934 of a Labour Officer, whose duties are to ascertain the grievances of the workers and to convey them to the management of the mill concerned, and also to act as liaison officer and be present, whenever necessary, at any discussions between the management and the Government Labour Officer.³

Finally, Indian employers' associations actively participate in the work of the International Labour Organisation through their delegations to the International Labour Conference and their representation on the Governing Body of the International Labour Office; by arrangement with the employers of Japan and the Union of South Africa a representative of Indian employers is a member of the Governing Body for two years in three, attending as a deputy member during the third year.

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 316.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 385-386.

³ *Report of the Mill Owners' Association, Bombay, for 1934*, pp. 187-188.

2. — Labour Organisations

DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE UNIONS

The first recorded case of collective representation of their claims by Indian workers was in 1884, when a conference of workers was called in Bombay for the purpose of drawing up a memorial to the Factory Commission then sitting in that city. In 1890 a union, called the Bombay Mill Hands' Association, was organised,¹ but this was a loose combination rather than a corporate body, as it had neither a definite constitution nor paying membership. Actually the first labour organisation in India was the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants of India and Burma, which came into existence in 1897 and was registered under the India Companies Act; this organisation still exists under another name and with a different constitution and is registered under the Trade Union Act of 1926.² Early in the present century isolated unions were also started in several places, such as the Printers' Union in Calcutta in 1905, the Postal Union in Bombay City in 1907, and the *Kamgar-Hitwardhak-Sabha* (Workmen's Welfare Association) also in Bombay City in 1910.³

It was not until 1918, however, that the trade union movement can be said to have begun in India. In that year, an industrial organisation was started among the textile workers at Madras, and the Clerks' Union and Postmen's Union in Bombay⁴ and the Seamen's Union in Calcutta were also founded; since then the number of organisations has been rapidly increasing in almost all industries throughout the country. In this development of trade unionism, the existence of the International Labour Organisation has played an important part; the need for central organisations to nominate delegates to the Conference led to the founding of such organisations, and these in their turn have stimulated the formation of individual unions.

The exact number and membership of trade unions in India

¹ GREAT BRITAIN : *Parliamentary Papers*, 1890-1891, Vol. 59, H. of C., 86, pp. 106-107.

² *The Indian Year-Book*, 1934-1935, p. 527. This union is now the National Union of Railwaymen of India and Burma.

³ *The Directory of Trade Unions*, by R. R. BAKHALE, Bombay, 1925, p. ii.

⁴ *Labour Gazette*, September 1922, p. 28.

are difficult to ascertain. Membership is still often not strictly defined and many members are retained on the books who have long ceased to pay any subscription ; moreover, there is no system of checking the figures of trade union membership. In 1925 the total number of unions was reported to be 175, including 75 organisations of Government and semi-Government servants.¹ In 1929 51 unions, claiming 190,436 members, were affiliated to the All-India Trade Union Congress. Early in 1937, 63 unions with a membership of 151,336 workers were affiliated to the National Trades Union Federation, which was formed as a consequence of a split at the Nagpur meeting of the Trade Union Congress in 1929 ;² in addition a number of unions was still affiliated to the All-India Trade Union Congress in 1937, and there were also other unions which were not connected with either of these national federations.

The number and membership of the unions which have registered under the Trade Unions Act since 1927, when the Act came into force, are shown below. Even this information, however, is not complete, as a number of unions failed to submit the prescribed returns. The table shows that the peak year for membership was 1934-1935 and that, although there were, in 1935-1936, 23 more registered unions, the membership figure declined. The number of women members of registered unions

NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF REGISTERED UNIONS IN INDIA ¹

Year	Registered unions	Registered unions submitting returns	Total membership	Average membership per registered union
1927-1928	29	28	100,619	3,594
1928-1929	75	65	181,077	2,786
1929-1930	104	90	242,355	2,693
1930-1931	119	106	219,115	2,067
1931-1932	131	121	235,693	1,948
1932-1933	170	147	237,369	1,615
1933-1934	191	160	208,071	1,300
1934-1935	213	183	281,918	1,557
1935-1936	236	205	268,326	1,309

¹ Note on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act of 1926, for 1935-1936, Government of India, 1937, pp. 1 and 2.

¹ *The Directory of Trade Unions*, p. i.

² NATIONAL TRADE UNION FEDERATION : *Report of the Third Session, Servants of India Society's Home, 1937*, p. 49.

which made returns rose from 1,166 in 1927-1928 to 7,309 in 1935-1936.

During the same period, there was a considerable increase in trade union funds, although they remain small and reflect the small membership, the poverty of the members and laxity in the collection of subscriptions. From Rs.163,581 and Rs.160,578 in 1927-1928 the income and closing balance rose to Rs.528,712 and Rs.587,092 respectively in 1935-1936; the average income in 1935-1936 was Rs.2,591 per union and Rs.2-2-9 per member. Only a few of the unions maintained political funds.

The distribution of trade unions by provinces is shown in the table below. The most important trade union centres are naturally the most industrialised provinces: Bengal, Bombay and Madras; the number of registered unions was largest in Bombay, while the Bengal unions have the biggest membership.

DISTRIBUTION BY PROVINCE OF TRADE UNIONS IN INDIA, 1935-1936¹

Province	Registered unions	Unions submitting returns	Membership of unions submitting returns
Ajmer-Merwara	1	1	269
Bengal	69	59	80,816
Bihar and Orissa.	5	5	15,029
Bombay.	50	50	51,882
Burma	8	6	4,689
Central Provinces	17	14	10,815
Delhi.	14	13	8,259
Madras	32	25	22,704
Punjab	30	22	64,053
United Provinces	10	10	10,310
Total.	236	205	268,326

¹ The figures relate to 31 March 1936. *Note on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act of 1926*, for 1935-1936, Statement 1.

Accurate data on trade unionism in the provinces are available only for the Bombay Presidency, and relate both to registered and unregistered trade unions. The figures for the years from 1927 to 1936 are given in the table below. It will be seen that the number and membership of registered unions have steadily increased, although more than half the unions still remain outside the Act, and also that membership in both

registered and unregistered unions was highest in 1928, a year of particular strike activity in the Bombay Presidency.

GROWTH IN NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF REGISTERED AND UNREGISTERED UNIONS IN BOMBAY PRESIDENCY, 1927-1936¹

Quarter ending 1 December	All unions (registered and unregistered)		Registered unions	
	Number of unions	Membership	Number of unions	Membership
1927.	72	87,340	11	45,243
1928.	94	198,072	30	152,061
1929.	99	196,748	42	153,483
1930.	93	128,911	40	84,273
1931.	95	103,754	38	65,405
1932.	102	111,354	48	73,701
1933.	108	117,558	51	70,464
1934.	106	112,828	48	71,848
1935.	128	111,891	56	95,506
1936 (March).	131	113,790	56	96,255

¹ *Labour Gazette*, May 1936, p. 669.

The next table shows the numbers of unions and of members by industry. By far the largest number of unions and largest membership are to be found among transport workers ; of 205 unions which submitted returns in 1935-1936, more than half the members were railway servants. On the other hand,

CLASSIFICATION BY INDUSTRY OF TRADE UNIONS IN INDIA, 1935-1936¹

Industry	Number of unions submitting returns	Number of members
Railways.	50	149,798
Tramways	3	1,279
Textile.	26	26,709
Printing Presses	13	5,504
Municipal	21	9,647
Seamen	8	26,511
Docks and Port Trusts	13	9,098
Engineering.	8	2,649
Miscellaneous	63	37,131
Total.	205	268,326

¹ Only those which submitted returns. *Note on the Working of the Indian Trade Unions Act of 1926*, for 1935-1936, Statement II.

there is as yet no trade union of plantation workers, and the movement has only begun among miners.¹

TYPES OF TRADE UNION ORGANISATION

As in every trade union movement at an early stage of development, there are many types of trade unions in India, varying from small unions, whose financial position and membership is very uncertain and whose existence is usually brief, to unions which have overcome to a great extent the difficulties of young organisations and have achieved a considerable degree of stability.

At the bottom of the scale, the Royal Commission on Labour in India² placed the unions "which represent little or nothing more than the one or two men (generally drawn from the professional classes) who fill the leading offices... The object is to give a platform and a name to the leaders... This type of valueless growth, which is more characteristic of Bengal than of other provinces and is becoming rare even there, was stimulated by the belief that it would assist the leaders to secure nomination in the labour interest to local councils or international labour conferences." The Commission placed next those unions which came into existence to secure some definite and immediate object. These unions, though they may be organised by independent persons, have their origin in a genuine need of the workers. The commonest form is the "strike committee", which either disappears at the end of the strike, especially if it is unsuccessful, or enters a state of suspended animation until another dispute occurs.

Leaving aside temporary unions of this kind, trade unions in India may be classified as craft unions, trades unions, industrial unions and federations. Attempts have also been made to form company unions and, latterly, "communal" unions, i.e. unions whose members are recruited exclusively among Hindus or Moslems; but neither of these forms of trade union would seem to be a factor of importance at present.

The craft union is an organisation of workers in a single occupation; it is best represented in India by the Weavers' Union

¹ There were only two unions with a total membership of 3,825 workers in the Jharia coalfields by the end of 1937. Cf. NATIONAL TRADE UNION FEDERATION: *Report of the Third Session, 1937*, p. 47.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 319-320.

and the Throstle Union of Ahmedabad, both of which were founded in 1920 and had respectively 6,691 and 10,005 members on 1 March 1937. The trades union, a combination of workers employed in several kindred crafts or occupations in the same or allied industries, is a common type of union in India ; an example is the Card-room, Blow-room and Frame Department Union of Ahmedabad, which was founded in 1920 and had a membership of 3,837 on 1 March 1937.¹ Industrial unions are combinations of workers in the same industry, irrespective of their crafts or occupations ; the most important examples in India are the National Seamen's Union of India, which was registered in Bombay on 30 March 1932 and had a membership of 8,670 on 1 December 1936, and the Great Indian Peninsula Railway Workers' Union, which was founded and registered on 18 January 1932 and had 8,201 members on 1 March 1937.² Another union of a similar kind was the communist *Girni Kamgar* (Red Flag) Union of Bombay. This union came into existence during the strike period of 1928, and was registered under the Trade Union Act on 23 May 1928. At that time about 50,000 cotton mill workers joined the union, but the membership has since declined and on 1 March 1934 it was reported to be 6,000.³ Owing to failure to submit the prescribed annual report, the registration of the union was cancelled in 1935.

Local, provincial and national federations of trade unions are also found in India. The largest local federation is the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association, to which six unions were affiliated on 1 March 1937. Of the provincial federations, the largest are the Bombay Presidency Postal and Railway Mail Service Association (founded in April 1920) and the Bombay Presidency Postmen's and Lower Grade Staff Union (founded in April 1918) which consisted of 15 and 12 unions respectively on 1 March 1937.⁴ The most important national federations are the All-India Postal and Railway Mail Service Conference, the All-India Railwaymen's Federation, the All-India Trade Union Congress, and the National Trades Union Federation.⁵

¹ *Labour Gazette*, May 1937, p. 704.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 706-707.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 319 ; *Report of the Court of Enquiry*, 1929, Government of Bombay, pp. 50-57 ; *Labour Gazette*, May 1935, p. 722.

⁴ *Labour Gazette*, May 1937, pp. 702-703.

⁵ *Indian Year-Book*, 1934-1935, pp. 530-533. Among other national

The All-India Postal and Railway Mail Service Conference is a federation of eleven provincial postal and R.M.S. unions. It has received the recognition of Government, and has been able through deputations and otherwise to confer with the authorities on such matters as retrenchment, emergency cuts of salaries, hours of work, and transfer.

The All-India Railwaymen's Federation is the strongest trade union in the country ; in March 1931-1932, the number of affiliated unions was 15, with a total membership of 129,074.¹ The main object of the Federation is to achieve collective bargaining ; and although this bargaining at present consists only in presenting the views of railway servants to the authorities, the Federation has been successful in arranging that it should present the case of the railwaymen in a joint session with the Railway Board twice a year.

The aforementioned Federations are organisations of particular classes of workers ; the All-India Trade Union Congress and the National Trades Union Federation aim at the affiliation of unions of all categories. The All-India Trade Union Congress was started in Bombay City in 1920, with the object of co-ordinating " the activities of all organisations in all the provinces in India, and generally to further the interests of Indian labour in matters economic, social and political ".² Since 1929 the Congress has lost its former power and prestige in the Indian trade union movement, but for ten years it served as a national platform for the declaration of the policy of organised labour, and it was the body chosen to represent the interests of Indian labour in both national and international organisations.

The reason for the decline of the Congress was, as already mentioned, the split which took place at the tenth session, held at Nagpur on 30 November 1929, when several resolutions relating, among other things, to the boycott of the Royal Commission on

federations may be mentioned the following : (1) National Union of Railwaymen of India and Burma ; (2) All-India and Burma Covenanted Non-Gazetted Railway Service Association ; (3) All-India Telegraph Union ; (4) All-India Post and Telegraph Administration Officers' Staff Association ; (5) All-India Government Employees' Federation ; (6) All-India Currency Association ; (7) The Central Body of Military Accounts Association ; (8) National Federation of Textile Labour in India.

¹ The Federation began in 1921 and was originally called the All-India Railwaymen's Union Federation. *Administration Report of the All-India Railwaymen's Federation, 1931-1932 ; Directory of Trade Unions*, pp. 6-7.

² *Indian Year-Book, 1934-1935*, p. 531.

Labour in India and the severance of connection with the International Labour Conference were adopted. The unions opposing these resolutions thereupon seceded and later formed the Indian Trades Union Federation. Meanwhile, however, a further division took place at the eleventh session of the Congress, held in Calcutta in July 1931, the seceding sections later forming the Red Trade Union Congress. This situation remained unaltered at the twelfth and thirteenth sessions of the Congress, held at Madras and Cawnpore in 1932 and 1933 respectively, when resolutions were passed advocating class struggle as the main object of trade unionism, and also favouring a general strike in the Bombay textile industry. However, at the fourteenth session, held in Calcutta in April 1935, an agreement was reached between the representatives of the All-India Trade Union Congress and the Red Trade Union Congress on the fundamental principles of trade union unity. The terms of this agreement were as follows : (1) the recognition of the All-India Trade Union Congress as the central organisation of the Indian working classes ; (2) the acceptance of the principle of class struggle ; (3) the principle of one union for each industry ; (4) no affiliation to any foreign organisation ; and (5) the right of each group or party in the Congress to carry on propaganda and to make criticisms consistent with discipline. The Trade Union Congress representatives on the Joint Committee were also urged to strive for unity with the National Trades Union Federation.¹

After the split at Nagpur, the seceding unions organised an Indian Trades Union Federation, which held its first session at Madras in July 1932 ; the session was attended by 31 delegates, representing 23 affiliated unions, with a membership of 82,500 workers. Negotiations with the All-India Trade Union Congress for the purpose of re-establishing a united organisation were unsuccessful, but agreement was reached with another new central organisation called the National Federation of Labour and, on 10 May 1933, the Indian Trades Union Federation and the National Federation of Labour were amalgamated under the name of the National Trades Union Federation, which became the most representative body in Indian trade unionism.

¹ *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 21 April 1935 ; *Indian Labour Journal*, 12 May 1935 ; *Labour Gazette*, April 1935, p. 569. The reunion of the various sections was achieved in 1938.

INFLUENCE OF TRADE UNIONS

The available statistics of trade unions in India are not such as to render possible any useful numerical estimate of the importance of the unions in the industrial life of the country. Even a superficial comparison of the figures of trade union membership with those of the industrially employed population given in Chapter II suffices, however, to show that only a few unions have hitherto succeeded in organising more than a minority of the workers.

The reasons for this situation were carefully examined by the Royal Commission on Labour in India. The Commission found that the obstacles to trade union development were to a large extent due to the nature of Indian labour. It is, in the first place, still largely migratory, and "those who are frequently leaving an industrial centre, even for short spells, and are frequently changing their employer, are less inclined than more permanent workers to maintain a constant interest in any organisation". Moreover, "the present conditions of industrial life in India are not conducive to the unflagging endeavour which proved so necessary in the West for the maintenance of trade unions; those whose wages and leisure are barely adequate for sustained work in the factory are not likely to find energy or leisure for activity outside it... Another serious handicap is the poverty of the average worker, to whom even a small subscription can be an appreciable burden, particularly when he is already encumbered by debt... Differences of language and race are separating factors, and to these is frequently added the active opposition of the jobbers, or their equivalent, to anything resembling a horizontal organisation." ¹

In the opinion of the Royal Commission there are, however, even more fundamental difficulties. "Trade unionism, to be fully effective, demands two things: a democratic spirit and education. The democratic ideal has still to be developed in the Indian worker, and the lack of education is the most serious obstacle of all." As a result of the inability of the worker to take a long view "few trade unions can afford to conduct benevolent work, and the majority find it hard to convince the worker

¹ Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, p. 321.

that a subscription is worth while, -except when a dispute is imminent or in progress".¹

Nevertheless, the Commission expressed its conviction that " nothing but a strong trade union movement will give the Indian workman adequate protection. Legislation can act as a palliative and prevent the graver abuses, but there are strict limitations to the power of Government and the public to protect workmen who are unable to protect themselves. Labour laws, indeed, find one of their most effective sanctions in the support of organised unions." Such institutions as works committees, industrial tribunals and conciliation boards are no substitute. " Nor is labour the only party that will benefit from a sound development of the trade union movement. Employers and the public generally should welcome its growth." ²

The Commission found that " the importance of developing healthy trade unions is denied by practically none. Government has declared its policy to be one of encouragement, and a great majority of employers appearing before us avowed a similar aim." ³ But on the question of the recognition of trade unions by employers, which " has become the acid test ", the opinions of employing interests are still very divided. In this vital matter, therefore, although the progress made is very appreciable in the circumstances, Indian trade unionism is still severely handicapped.

The position in regard to recognition, without which there can be no collective bargaining and no sound development of the influence of trade unionism in India, is as follows :

Before 1920 the Central and Local Governments were opposed to the organisation of their employees and prohibited them from submitting any collective memorials or petitions. After 1920 this right was granted to those combinations which accepted certain rules, called " recognition rules ", and such recognised unions were able to conduct negotiations with the Governments concerned on behalf of their members. Moreover, the Government of India conceded the principle of the right of their employees to have outside leaders. After the passage of the Trade Union Act, 1926, however, both the Government of India

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 321-322.

² *Ibid.*, p. 322.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

and several Provincial Governments advised the unions of their employees not to apply for registration. This attitude of the Governments apparently arose from the difficulty of reconciling the privileges which their employees received as members of registered unions with their obligations under the Government Servants' Conduct Rules. The Royal Commission pointed out, however, that these Rules were framed primarily to regulate the conduct of officials outside the ranks of labour, and suggested that, in regard to industrial workers, Government should take the lead in making recognition of their unions easy and in encouraging them to secure registration.¹ The policy of the Government has now been changed, and unions of industrial workers employed by Government are required to register.

According to the Royal Commission, private employers have tended to recognise unions subject to the acceptance of rules similar to those laid down by Governments. In the case both of public and private employment, however, recognition has been trammelled by a misconception of the implications of recognition. "Some seem to think that 'recognition' means that the employer recognises the right of the union to speak on behalf of all his workmen, or at any rate all the class for which the union caters... In our view recognition should mean that the employer recognises the right of the union to negotiate with him in respect of matters affecting either the common or the individual interests of its members. ... Recognition in the letter must be followed by recognition in the spirit, by a readiness to discuss sympathetically points put forward by the union, by accessibility to its officers and by willingness to let them have credit where credit is due." ²

Other reasons given for refusing recognition were found by the Commission to be the circumstance that a union embraces only a minority of the class of workers concerned, the prior existence of another union, the refusal of a union to dispense with the services of a particular official, the inclusion of outsiders in the executive bodies, and the failure of a union to register under the Trade Union Act.

Neither the minority character of a union nor the prior existence of another union seemed to the Royal Commission to be good reasons for refusing recognition, and "the endeavour to

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 326.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 323-324.

dictate to unions on the subject of their officers or leaders is equally short-sighted and unwise". While strongly insisting on the need for trade union leaders drawn from the ranks of labour, the Commission held that some outside leadership was at present inevitable. "The claim to be allowed to deal only with 'one's own men' is frequently little more than an endeavour to secure that the case of the men shall be presented by persons who are not likely to prove assertive." The question of insistence on registration the Commission held to be on a different footing. "As the law stands at present, registration generally involves no obligations that a *bona-fide* union should not be willing to undertake." ¹

From the information available it would appear that recognition in India is still generally limited to individual employers; of collective bargaining in the sense of negotiations between organisations of employers and organisations of workers there is very little. It is of much importance that the Central and Local Governments, which are large employers of labour, should have granted to some unions of Government servants the right to present their grievances to Government authorities, but this possibility of submitting grievances hardly constitutes collective bargaining. The only trade union which has succeeded in establishing collective bargaining is the Labour Union at Ahmedabad, where, since 1920, there has existed a permanent arbitration board, consisting of a representative of the union and a representative of the Mill Owners' Association. All grievances are in the first instance discussed between the workers and the mill managements, and, if necessary, between the Union and the Association; if no agreement is then reached, disputes are referred to the Arbitration Board for final decision. ²

Apart from this essential form of trade union activity — negotiations with employers — and the action of trade unions in industrial disputes, to which reference is made in the next section, Indian trade unionism exerts an influence on labour policy and conditions in a number of ways. Mention of welfare activities, such as those of the Labour Union of Ahmedabad, will be made in a later chapter; here it will suffice to refer to the labour press of the unions and the increasingly important part the unions are

¹ Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, p. 325.

² ROYAL COMMISSION ON INDIAN LABOUR: Memorandum from the Government of Bombay, pp. 235-236.

playing in the representation of the workers on national and international bodies.

The idea of a labour press was first conceived in 1890 when the first labour union was formed and a paper called *Dinabandhu* or the " Friend of the Poor " was started. In recent years, several unions have their regular weekly, fortnightly or monthly publications, and propaganda tracts and reports are published by most of the large trade unions. Mention may also be made of the papers issued by social service workers, such as the Servants of India Society.

Indian labour is represented by trade union leaders both in the Central Legislative Assembly and in the Legislative Councils of several Provinces, such as Bombay and Bengal, and on some port trusts and municipalities ; and trade union leaders were members of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, the Round Table Conference on the Indian Constitution, and the Indian Franchise Committee. Most of these representatives are nominated by the Government, but the fact that trade union leaders are selected tends to increase the stability and sense of responsibility of the unions, as well as to secure that greater regard is had to the interests of labour.

Representatives of Indian trade unions have also been present at meetings of foreign or international organisations such as the British Trades Union Congress and the Annual Congress of the International Federation of Trade Unions ; and in 1934 Indian trade unionism took part in the first meeting of the Asiatic Labour Congress. Negotiations for the organisation of this Congress had been proceeding among the Japanese, Indian and Chinese labour leaders since 1925. The first session was held at Colombo on 10 May 1934, and was attended by Indian, Japanese and Ceylonese delegates.¹ The next meeting was held in Tokyo, Japan, on 17-19 May 1937 and was attended by Japanese and Indian delegates.²

From its participation in the International Labour Organisation the Indian trade union movement has derived considerable stimulus. The beginning of modern trade unionism in India practically coincided with the birth of the Organisation, and the

¹ ASIATIC LABOUR CONGRESS : *Report of the First Session and Constitution*, Bombay, Servants of India Society's Home, 1934, pp. 1-15.

² *Labour Gazette*, September 1937, pp. 35-38.

representation of Indian labour at successive sessions of the International Labour Conference since 1919 has not only afforded Indian labour leaders an opportunity of co-operating in the work of the Conference, of coming into contact with the trade union leaders of other countries and of making known the claims of Indian labour to the representatives of other nations, but it has also given new strength and impetus to the movement in India.

However, in spite of the progress made in recent years, the Indian trade union movement still suffers from internal weakness and external opposition and misunderstanding. It is still too dependent on outside leadership and although this is inevitable in the present stage of its development, the inherent defects of this dependency are a source of weakness. Most of the leaders are lawyers, professional men and social workers, and therefore lack technical knowledge of the industries in which the union members are employed, as well as that complete sympathy with labour that comes from having "gone through the mill". Moreover, some outside leaders are connected with several unions at the same time and are unable to give enough attention to any of them, while the philanthropic nature of their work tends in some cases to weaken their sense of responsibility.

The need for whole-time salaried organisers and leaders drawn from the ranks of labour is not, however, the only need of Indian trade unions. The Royal Commission on Labour in India pointed out that "true vigour can only come from within", and that Indian trade unions needed to become more generally self-reliant and to develop an "internal collective will" by the training of their members and their closer association with the work of the unions. The Commission further recommended that the unions should widen their range of activities as, for example, by the promotion of co-operative institutions, adult education, and benefit funds.¹

3. — Industrial Disputes

The need for the improved organisation of industrial relations in India is particularly brought into evidence by the comparative frequency of industrial strife. In the following pages a survey is

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 327-328.

made of the extent of industrial conflict and of the measures taken or proposed in India to prevent the occurrence of strikes and lock-outs or their settlement when they cannot be prevented.

EXTENT OF INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT

Isolated industrial disputes took place in India as early as the eighties of the last century, but it was not until 1918 that they became serious and attracted public attention. The gravity of the outbreak of strikes immediately after the war may be illustrated by the case of the Bombay Presidency. There were two general strikes in Bombay in 1918-1919 and 1920, lasting six weeks and a month respectively and involving about 150,000 workers ; two strikes in Ahmedabad in 1920 and 1921, involving 30,000 and 33,000 persons respectively ; a strike at Sholapur in 1920 involved 16,000 persons, and another strike in 1922 affected the whole working population ; during 1920 and 1921 there were strikes among postal workers, tramway workers, gas workers, and railway shop workers, lasting from a fortnight to five months, and involving from 2,000 to 7,000 persons in each case ; strikes in single factories on trivial grounds became matters of daily occurrence.¹ " The main cause was the realisation of the potentialities of the strike in the existing situation, and this was assisted by the emergence of trade union organisers, by the education which the war had given to the masses and by a scarcity of labour arising from the expansion of industry and aggravated by the great epidemics of influenza. " ²

Accurate data on industrial disputes did not, however, become available until 1921, when a Labour Office was established by the Government of Bombay. About the same time, some other Local Governments began to establish labour offices, and the Government of India also took measures to compile records of disputes for the whole of British India.

The number of disputes in British India since 1921 up to the present time, together with the numbers of workers involved and of working days lost are shown in the table below. It will be seen that the 1921 figures for disputes and workers affected have

¹ " Report of the Industrial Disputes Committee " — see *Labour Gazette*, April 1922, p. 23.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 333.

not again been reached, although the number of working days lost was about twice as many in 1925 and 1929 and five times as many in 1928. In 1934 there was an increase in industrial conflicts, the figures for disputes, persons involved and working days lost being the highest recorded since 1929.

NUMBER OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES IN INDIA
1921-1936 ¹

Year	Disputes	Workers involved	Working days lost
1921 . . .	396	600,351	6,984,426
1922 . . .	278	435,434	3,972,727
1923 . . .	213	301,044	5,051,704
1924 . . .	133	312,462	8,730,918
1925 . . .	134	270,423	12,578,129
1926 . . .	128	186,812	1,097,478
1927 . . .	129	131,655	2,019,970
1928 . . .	203	506,851	31,647,404
1929 . . .	141	532,016	12,165,691
1930 . . .	148	196,301	2,261,731
1931 . . .	166	203,008	2,408,123
1932 . . .	118	128,099	1,922,437
1933 . . .	146	164,938	2,168,961
1934 . . .	159	220,808	4,775,559
1935 . . .	145	114,217	973,457
1936 . . .	157	169,029	2,358,062

¹ Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour, No. 43 : *Industrial Disputes in India, 1921-1928*, Government of India, Calcutta, 1930, pp. 23-29 ; No. 62 : *1929-1936*, pp. 33-34.

Dealing with the causes of industrial disputes the Royal Commission cites statistics tabulated by the Government of India showing " that in 976 disputes the principal demand related to the question of pay or bonus and in 425 to the question of personnel... 74 strikes were primarily concerned with questions of leave or hours of work and the remaining 382 are unclassified in respect of the demand made ". ¹

Behind immediate causes, however, wider influences were at work. " The great outbreak of strife after the war had obvious economic causes ; a rise in wage levels was overdue, and the workers awoke to the disabilities from which they suffered in respect of long hours and other matters. " ¹ This statement of the Royal Commission may be illustrated by the fact that, in 1918, although the profits of some textile undertakings were enormous,

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 334.

rising to 200 per cent. or more in some cases,¹ the real wages of the workers declined owing to the abrupt rise of prices immediately after the war. Some increases of wages were granted by employers, but the rise in wages did not keep pace with the rising cost of living.

The strikes that broke out at this period were, as noted by the Royal Commission, aided by the shortage of labour caused by the influenza epidemics, which were not only accompanied by high mortality and morbidity rates but also by an exodus of workers from industrial centres. Their success was also promoted by the important part played by trade union organisations and by the leadership of outsiders. The extent of the success of strikes in the early post-war period may be exemplified by the fact that in Bengal, in the last six months of 1920, 66 out of 97 strikes were successful.

Political influences also had some part in the post-war strike movement, especially during the period of intensive political agitation in 1920-1921. "A few strikes were organised by political leaders; more frequently opponents of Government used their influence to intensify disputes which were economic in origin."² An example of such a conflict was the one which broke out in the Assam tea gardens in 1921. The failure of the tea industry to increase wages in consequence of the rise in cost of living caused great distress among the workers, and this situation was fully utilised by politicians.³ However, the Royal Commission concluded that, "although workers may have been influenced by persons with nationalist, communist or commercial ends to serve, we believe that there has rarely been a strike of any importance which has not been due entirely or largely, to economic reasons."⁴

Of the strikes which have taken place since the immediate post-war period, one of the most serious occurred in the cotton industry in Bombay City in 1924; this strike affected all the cotton mills, involved over 160,000 workers and caused a loss of

¹ Out of 44 jute mill companies, whose dividends were quoted in 1918, 13 paid dividends of 200 per cent. or more, and only 9, including two new concerns, paid less than 7 per cent. — Cf. *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour: Industrial Disputes in India, 1921-1928*, p. 2.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 335.

³ *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour: Industrial Disputes in India, 1921-1928*, pp. 4 and 5.

⁴ Cf. note 2.

about 7.75 million working days. The immediate cause of the trouble was the decision of the Mill Owners' Association to withhold the annual bonus for the workers owing to trade depression. As the bonus had been granted for five years and had become a part of the wages, the workers objected strongly to its withholding and resorted to strike. A further strike, caused by the decision of the Bombay Mill Owners' Association to reduce the dearness allowance by 20 per cent., a decision which would have involved a reduction of 11.5 per cent. in the wages of the workers, broke out in September 1925. The mill owners finally decided to restore the cut, but not before the strike had caused a loss of about 11 million working days ; the satisfactory outcome of the strike from the workers' point of view was largely due to the decision of the Government to abolish the cotton excise duty.

After a period of relative calm, there was a fresh outbreak of industrial strife all over the country in 1928. The total number of working days lost during the year was 31.5 million, of which 22.3 million were in the Bombay cotton industry, where a general strike took place owing to the decision of the Mill Owners' Association to introduce new methods of work with a view to increasing labour efficiency and economising the costs of production. Among other disputes during the year, the most important were those in the Tata Iron and Steel Works, the East Indian Railway, the South Indian Railway and some of the jute mills in Bengal. ¹

In 1929 industrial unrest was still rife and the number of workers involved even increased, although the number of disputes was smaller and the total number of working days lost was only a little over 12 million. The principal centres of the strike movement were the Bombay textile mills and the Bengal jute mills, in which general stoppages resulted in a loss of over 9.6 million working days. ² These strikes were notable for the emergence, particularly in Bombay, of a new influence, that of communism, against which measures were taken both by the Government of India and the Government of the Bombay Presidency.

The year 1934 was also marked by an increase in industrial unrest as compared with the years 1930-1933. The number of working days lost was 4,775,559, more than half of this loss being due to a general strike in the Bombay textile industry, which

¹ *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour* : Industrial Disputes in India, 1921-1928, pp. 2-12.

² *Labour Gazette*, Bombay, April 1930, p. 829.

lasted from April to June and involved 90,000 workers. Among other strikes, the most important were those which took place in the Sholapur Cotton Mills from February to May, and in the Empress Cotton Mills, Nagpur, between May and July 1934, each of which caused the loss of about 460,000 working days. 1935 was a relatively peaceful year, but there was increased conflict in 1936.

The provincial distribution of industrial disputes during the year 1936 is shown in the following table :

DISTRIBUTION BY PROVINCE OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES
IN INDIA, 1936¹

Province	Disputes	Workers involved	Working days lost
Assam	9	3,233	29,298
Bengal.	39	71,439	675,170
Bombay	49	35,323	447,812
Barma	9	3,899	11,081
Central Provinces . . .	9	9,059	236,127
Madras	24	13,121	126,117
United Provinces . . .	7	8,388	86,831
Ajmer-Merwara	1	4,012	375,716
Bihar and Orissa . . .	6	10,642	213,096
Delhi	2	6,446	42,446
Punjab.	4	1,267	12,438
Bangalore	2	2,200	101,600
Total.	161—4=157 ²	169,029	2,358,062

¹ *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour* : Industrial Disputes in India, No. 62, p. 25.

² One strike was common to five provinces.

As this table shows, industrial unrest was greatest in the Presidencies of Bombay and Bengal. This fact is not entirely due to the more advanced degree of industrial development of these provinces, but also, as will be seen from the next table, to the predominance in these centres of the textile industry. Indeed, more than one-third of the disputes in 1936 took place in cotton and woollen mills, and affected over one-third of the total number of workers involved and accounted for two-fifths of the working days lost.

The distribution of industrial disputes by industries in 1936 was as follows :

CLASSIFICATION BY INDUSTRY OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES
IN INDIA, 1936 ¹

Industry	Disputes	Workers involved	Working days lost
Cotton and woollen mills . .	58	58,956	1,043,461
Jute mills	14	47,742	334,693
Engineering workshops . . .	3	121	176
Railways, including railway workshops	1	26,542	442,367
Mines	3	932	7,192
Others	78	34,736	530,173
Total . . .	157	169,029	2,358,062

¹ *Bulletins of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 62, p. 34.

The immediate causes of industrial disputes are classified in official reports under the five headings of wages, bonus, personnel (i.e. employment and dismissal of workers), leave and hours of work, and others. In 1936, out of 157 disputes, 96 were concerned with wages, 1 with the question of bonus, 24 with

RESULTS OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES IN INDIA, 1921-1936 ¹

Year	Number of disputes in which workers were			Total
	Successful	Partially successful	Unsuccessful	
1921 . .	92	87	211	390
1922 . .	34	25	215	274
1923 . .	34	19	159	212
1924 . .	23	21	88	132
1925 . .	17	27	89	133
1926 . .	12	12	104	128
1927 . .	15	32	79	126
1928 . .	27	41	128	196
1929 . .	31	27	80	138
1930 . .	36	22	89	147
1931 . .	23	42	99	164
1932 . .	14	27	74	115
1933 . .	20	23	96	139
1934 . .	32	25	100	157
1935 . .	25	29	91	145
1936 . .	31	43	83	157
Total :	466	502	1,785	2,753

¹ Compiled from *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 43 : Industrial Disputes in India, 1921-1928 ; No. 62, 1929-1936.

questions of personnel, 6, with leave and hours of work, and 30 with other matters.

As regards the results of disputes, the table shows that, during the years 1921 to 1936, 466 disputes out of 2,753, of which the decisive results were known, were entirely successful, and 502 were partially successful ; in other words, only a little over one-third of the disputes resulted wholly or partially in favour of the workers.

PREVENTION AND SETTLEMENT OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES

In its review of the methods adopted or to be recommended for the prevention of disputes, or their settlement if they cannot be prevented, the Royal Commission on Labour in India considered in the first place the part that might be played by works committees. At the time the Commission reported such committees had been working for some years in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras with considerable success, in various State and private undertakings and in several of the leading railway systems. " Some committees have been successful and there are probably few that have been without use ; but generally speaking the results achieved have been disappointing. " ¹

Discussing the comparatively small measure of success achieved by works committees, the Royal Commission stated that " in the minds of many employers there is the belief that works committees will provide a substitute for trade unions, while these are regarded by trade union leaders as rival institutions, deserving of no encouragement. " ² If works committees are to succeed, and the Commission believed that they could serve a useful function in the Indian industrial system, it is essential " that, where there is a trade union, the employer should seek its collaboration and co-operation in the establishment and working of these committees, which should not be regarded or used as rivals to its influence ". ³ The Commission further recommended that the range of subjects placed before works committees should be as wide as possible, and that managements should collaborate with a real appreciation of the workers' point of view.

The only instance found by the Royal Commission of ma-

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 336.

² *Ibid.*, p. 342.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 342-343.

chinery being set up within an industry for the regulation of relations between a group of employers and their workpeople was the Ahmedabad system, to which reference was made above. The Commission found that "the system is admirable in its intentions and has had a substantial measure of success".¹ There are, however, local factors assisting the operation of the scheme in Ahmedabad which do not exist elsewhere. The employers and most of the workers belong to the same part of India and have a common language and religion. Moreover, "the scheme seems to us to have depended largely on the unique position of Mr. Gandhi, whose influence in Ahmedabad, both with the employers and the workers, is very great. Both parties have confidence in his sense of fairness and sympathy towards them, and either party would be faced with serious difficulties if it found itself in direct opposition to his views."²

Nevertheless, the Commission emphasised the primary importance of maintaining conciliation machinery for settling disputes within an industry. "In the larger industries and the main centres, the organisation of employers is more than adequate for the purpose. The organisation of the employees is, as a rule, weak; but we believe that in many centres it would suffice to make a start, and the working of joint machinery would go far to strengthen the better elements and to increase that sense of responsibility in trade unions which so many employers are anxious to develop".³

The development of external machinery of general application for the settlement of disputes is a question which has received much more official and public attention in India than the measures discussed above. "The first attempts to settle disputes by the appointment of more or less formal bodies were made in Madras in 1919 and 1920, when on four separate occasions courts of enquiry were appointed consisting of an official chairman and one member chosen by each party. The courts seem to have had a fair measure of success, but no such court was appointed in Madras after 1920. Courts or committees of a similar character were instrumental in terminating two strikes in Burma and two in Bengal in 1920 and 1921."⁴

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 337.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 343-344.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

In the year 1921 representative committees were set up in Bengal and Bombay to consider the possibility of alleviating industrial unrest.

The committee appointed by the Government of Bengal rejected as inapplicable to Bengal conditions all schemes involving any element of compulsion by legal process and advocated the settling of disputes by agreement between employers and employees themselves, by means of joint works committees.¹ It also suggested, however, that in the case of strikes in public utility services, a conciliation board should be set up on the application of one or both of the parties or by Government of its own initiative, this board to have no legal power to enforce its findings, but to rely on the strength of public opinion to induce the parties to accept them. In the case of disputes in industries other than public utility services, a conciliation board should be constituted only at the express request of both parties.² In application of these recommendations a conciliation panel was formed and reconstituted every year until 1929, but its services were never utilised.³

The Bombay committee made recommendations both for the prevention and settlement of disputes. Among other preventive measures, the Committee recommended the standardisation of wages, the undertaking of housing and welfare work, the establishment of works committees and the recognition of trade unions. For the settlement of disputes, the committee recommended that legislation should be passed providing for the setting up of courts of enquiry, to be followed, if necessary, by courts of conciliation. A court of enquiry was to be composed of a chairman selected from a panel constituted for the purpose and of three representatives each of the employers and employees in the industry concerned. When the dispute occurred in a Government service or public utility service, the court was to consist of a chairman, selected as before, and of three representatives each of the Government, the employees and the public. After the results of the enquiry had been made public, and if the need still existed, the court, or another court constituted on the same lines, might be entrusted with the duty of conciliation. While the court of enquiry could be set up at the request of either of the parties, the

¹ *Labour Gazette*, October 1921, p. 26.

² *Ibid.*, October 1921, pp. 26-27.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 338.

court of conciliation could be called into action only by the request of both the employers and workers.¹ No immediate action was taken on the recommendation of this committee. After the Bombay cotton mill strike of 1924, however, a Bill was prepared by the Government of Bombay, but was withheld at the instance of the Government of India, which was then proposing to introduce the legislation which, in fact, was not passed until 1929.

Before the Trade Disputes Act was passed, Local Governments on several occasions intervened for the settlement of disputes. For example, in 1924 and 1928 committees of enquiry, consisting in each case of two independent persons with a High Court Judge as chairman, were appointed in Bombay to report on questions arising out of the general strikes in the cotton mills. In the former case the report of the committee had an important influence on the issue of the dispute. The 1928 strike was brought to an end with the appointment of a committee "for the permanent settlement of the dispute", but although the committee made a number of valuable proposals for the future regulation of working conditions, these proposals were not carried out owing to the breakdown of negotiations between the parties.²

Statutory provision for the appointment of courts of enquiry and boards of conciliation in cases of industrial disputes was made in the Trade Disputes Act of 1929, a short account of which was given in Chapter III. The Act empowers Local Governments — or the Central Government where the employer is a department of the Central Government or a railway company — to refer "any matters appearing to be connected with or relevant to" an existing or apprehended dispute to a court of enquiry or to refer the dispute to a board of conciliation; the same action must be taken on the application of both the parties to a dispute. Both courts of enquiry and boards of conciliation are specially appointed in each case: a court consists of an independent chairman and such other independent persons as the appointing authority thinks fit, or of one independent person only; a board consists of an independent chairman and two or four members who may be independent persons or representatives of the parties, or of one independent person.

¹ *Labour Gazette*, April 1922, pp. 23-33.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 339.

The duties of courts of enquiry are confined to the investigation of the matters referred to them and to reporting to the authority which appointed them. Boards of conciliation are, on the other hand, charged with the duty of attempting to effect a " fair and amicable settlement " ; if no settlement is reached the boards must report to the appointing authority. When the appointing authority has received the report of a court or board it must publish the report as soon as possible. There the statutory obligations of the public authorities end, reliance being placed on public opinion to induce the parties to accept the recommendations that may be made in the report.

The question whether the law should be so amended as (1) to make it obligatory on the public authorities to refer disputes to arbitration and (2) to give force of law to the findings of tribunals appointed to deal with disputes was examined by the Royal Commission on Labour in India. Both these proposals seemed to the Commission to be open to serious objections. The Commission expressed the hope, however, that the authorities would make more and earlier use of their powers to appoint courts of enquiry or boards of conciliation. " There seems to be a tendency at present for Government to withhold their hand until a dispute has attained serious magnitude and constitutes a threat to the public peace. There may be a case for the appointment of a tribunal, even if there is little danger of disturbance and no clamant demand for action on the part of the public. " ¹ It also suggested that in public utility services, in which strikes without due notice are forbidden, provision should be made for arbitration " conditional on a definite failure of the parties to reach agreement in a reasonable time and on a substantial measure of support for an application, and by requiring a deposit of money with each application ". ²

Mention has already been made in Chapter III of the recommendation of the Royal Commission for the appointment by Local Governments of conciliation officers, and of the partial effect given to this proposal by the Government of Bombay in the Trade Disputes Conciliation Act of 1934. It is noteworthy that this Act gives effect to the suggestion of the Royal Commission that conciliation courts should be permanent by providing for the creation

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 345.

² *Ibid.*, p. 346.

of a Conciliation Board with the Commissioner of Labour as *ex officio* Chief Conciliator.

Since the Commissioner of Labour of the Bombay Presidency assumed the duties of Chief Conciliator in October 1934 he has succeeded in settling many small industrial disputes, as well as a more important dispute between the Western Indian Match Company and their workers. Although the Western Indian Match Company was outside his jurisdiction, both the employers and the workers had agreed to the arbitration of the Chief Conciliator on the question of wages, and his award on the rates of wages was accepted by both parties on 5 April 1935.¹

The Bombay Act also provided for the appointment of a Labour Officer. While the duties of the Chief Conciliator are to bring about a settlement of differences or disputes between the employer and the worker which have started or are about to start, the duty of the Labour Officer is to remove the grievances of the worker which are at the root of such disputes. In representing the case of the worker to the employer, the Government Labour Officer is greatly helped by the Mill Owners' Labour Officer.

Some idea of the work of the Labour Officer may be had from the cases dealt with during the ten months from September 1934 to June 1935. Of 519 cases, over one-third were wrongful discharges and the remainder concerned such matters as reinstatements, re-engagements, wages, welfare work, assaults and intimidations, and bribery and corruption. The details of the cases are as follows :

WORK OF THE LABOUR OFFICER, BOMBAY¹

Classification	September to December 1934	January to June 1935	Total
Wrongful discharges.	58	120	178
Reinstatements	18	24	42
Re-engagements	16	43	59
Wages	18	53	71
Welfare work	9	36	45
Assaults and intimidations . .	2	34	36
Bribery and corruption . . .	15	30	45
False complaints	11	10	21
Others	14	8	22
Total.	161	358	519

¹ Adapted and compiled from *Labour Gazette*, December 1934, pp. 261 *et seq.*

^{1c} *Labour Gazette*, March 1935, p. 485.

At first, the appointment of the Government Labour Officer in Bombay had a mixed¹ reception ; while the above figures show that his services were being utilised and it was reported that some managements welcomed his activities, the managements and supervisory staffs in other mills are said to have opposed recourse by the workers to the Labour Officer for redress. Moreover, trade union leaders were apparently apprehensive that the appointment of Labour Officers by the Government and the employers would undermine the collective activities of the workers and the trade union movement.¹ More recently, there appears to have been increased recourse to the services of the Labour Officer.

¹ *Labour Gazette*, March 1935, pp. 508-510.

CHAPTER V

EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

The foregoing chapters have described the growth of organised industry in India, the extent and nature of industrial employment, the measures taken to regulate labour conditions, and the character and development of industrial relations. The next series of chapters will be devoted to a description of the more important aspects of the conditions of life and labour of Indian workers, beginning in the present chapter with the methods of recruiting and engaging labour, the organisation of employment, and the nature and extent of industrial unemployment.

1. — The Labour Supply

The composition of the industrial labour force in India was described in Chapter II above and it was shown in particular that, although a stable class of industrial workers, resident in the centres of employment, is being constituted, a considerable proportion of the workers is still villagers who only migrate temporarily to towns or other places of employment. The consequence of this migratory character of part of the industrial labour force, and the inadequate supply of labour resident in the centres of employment, is that employers must still, to some extent and in some industries and districts, have recourse to active recruiting of labour. Moreover, even where labour migrates spontaneously to the places of employment or is resident in the employment centres, methods of engaging labour which developed when workers had to be recruited at a distance still survive.

RECRUITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

In spite of the vast potentialities of India as a source of labour supply, organised industry, in its early days, was confronted with great difficulties not only in obtaining the right kind of labour but also a sufficient number of workers. The difficulty of numerical supply was most keenly felt in those new industries, i.e. the Assam tea gardens and the coal mines in Bengal and Bihar, which were situated in sparsely-populated regions. In the Assam tea gardens, the labour shortage was not successfully remedied by the early methods adopted of recruiting through contractors and *arkattis* (professional recruiters) and employment under indenture or long-term penal sanction contracts ; moreover, the potential labour supply was discouraged by rumours of the unhealthiness of the tea gardens, the difficulty of the journey, and the high death rate among the emigrants. In the coal mines, the shortage was aggravated by the reluctance of Indians to undertake underground mining.

In order to ascertain the causes of the insufficient supply of labour in organised industry, especially in the mines, the Government of India appointed a Labour Enquiry Commission in 1896, and a further enquiry was made in 1905. The latter enquiry concluded that the main cause of the labour shortage was that "proper steps had not been taken to obtain the ample supply that would otherwise have been readily obtainable".¹ It was true that, in addition to the demands made by the rising industries within India, plantations and other industries in Ceylon and the Malay Peninsula were making an increasing demand upon the available labour supply ; but even then, the main causes of labour shortage were that the places where labour was engaged were not known to the workers and the lack of any concerted action on the part of employers.²

The development of more efficient methods of recruiting, the engagement and employment of labour through contractors, the creation of regular currents of internal migration, and the settlement of increasing numbers of workers at the centres of employment are the methods by which the problem of numerical supply has largely been solved.

¹ B. FOLEY, I.C.S. : *Report on Labour in Bengal*, 1906, Calcutta, pp. 1, 29 and 67.

² *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. I, Part I, p. 250.

The method of obtaining labour for plantations varies according to their proximity to the sources of labour supply, but it is characterised almost everywhere by the employment of intermediaries. Thus, although most of the plantations in the South are situated within a short distance of the villages from which labour can be drawn, the recruiting is done through gangers known as *kanganies* and *maistries*, who receive from the planters loans, free of interest, from which to make advances to intending recruits and to pay the expenses of the workers and their families to the plantations. These advances are debited to the workers' accounts and are recovered during the period of their employment. The amount of advance varies in different districts, but it is estimated at an average of Rs.15 per worker.

In Bengal, tea gardens recruit their workers through *sardars* or agents. Although the workers are obtained from a considerable distance and the *sardari* system in Bengal is much the same as that employed to obtain labour for the Assam tea gardens, there has never been any marked difficulty in obtaining the necessary numbers of workers and recruiting has never been subject to regulation by Government. In Northern India, except for Assam, workers are directly engaged by employers themselves.

The Assam tea gardens recruit labour in many different parts of India. Although preference is given to the aboriginal population of Chota Nagpur and the Santhal parganas, considerable numbers of workers are still recruited from Bihar and Orissa, the United Provinces, the northern districts of Madras, the eastern and northern districts of the Central Provinces, and even from Bombay. In consequence of the difficulty and expense of maintaining the labour supply, the workers in the Assam tea gardens were formerly employed under long-term penal sanction contracts, the recruiting being in the hands of speculating contractors and professional recruiters. Between 1908 and 1915, however, the long contract or indenture system was abolished and professional recruiting replaced by a system under which *sardars*, who had to be *bona-fide* workers on the plantations, were entrusted with the recruiting of labour in their own villages; in 1915 the Assam Labour Board was created to supervise *sardari* recruiting.

This system of recruiting was further modified by the Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act, 1932, the provisions of which were analysed in Chapter III. The main objections to the system which the Act was designed to modify were that it seriously ham-

pered the free flow of labour to Assam, as no intending worker could be given assistance to proceed to Assam unless he was recruited by a *sardar*, that no form of advertisement or propaganda was permitted in the recruiting districts except by *sardars*, and that Provincial Governments could prohibit recruiting within their territories.

The condition that every worker needing assistance to proceed to the tea gardens must be recruited by a *sardar* made the system very costly. In 1932-1933, for instance, 12,831 *sardars* recruited only 38,907 persons including 9,743 children ; in other words, the number of persons recruited amounted to 3.03 per *sardar* employed, and 6,481 or half of the *sardars* failed to recruit a single person.¹ It has also been estimated that on an average about 7 per cent. of the total number of adult labourers on the books of the tea gardens were sent out annually as *sardars* to the recruiting districts, and that about one-third of these *sardars* failed to return to the gardens.² The expenses of this recruiting in the earlier years varied from Rs.200 to Rs.500 per person recruited, and latterly, in spite of the increased communication facilities, they ranged from Rs.120 to Rs.200, the average being about Rs.150 per recruit.³ The failure of *sardars* to return or their return without recruits was regarded by the tea industry as a mode of repatriation or leave with travelling expenses paid.

It was to remedy these defects and to establish a system which would eventually develop into free recruitment that the Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act of 1932⁴ was passed. Under this system, workers who do not require any material help for their journey or otherwise, can proceed freely to Assam without being recruited. Moreover, where workers are recruited or receive assistance for the journey to Assam, the methods of recruiting and forwarding are left to the discretion of employers, subject to regulation or supervision by the Local Governments concerned under the provisions of the Act relating to the control of emigration areas or of recruiting areas ; Local Governments are no longer empowered to prohibit recruiting altogether in their territories. The requirement of repatriation at the expense of the employer, introduced by the 1932 Act, will, it was believed by

¹ *Annual Report on the Working of the Assam Labour Board for 1932-1933*, p. 6 ; the figures relate to the year ended 30 June 1933 and the quarter July-September 1933.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 365.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 359.

the Royal Commission, enormously reduce the dangers of uncontrolled recruiting.

To the policy of free movement of labour as a guarantee of sufficient labour supply for the Assam tea gardens must be added the policy of encouraging settlement in Assam. Assam planters have tried from the beginning to create a settled labour population on or near the tea gardens, and have encouraged the recruitment of families rather than individuals. The results of this policy are shown by the fact that more than half the immigrants are composed of women and children, and by the increase of the settled population. In 1935-1936 ex-tea garden labourers and their families held 362,022 acres of Government land in the Assam valley, and 37,793 acres in the Surma Valley; labourers still employed by the tea gardens in 1935-1936 occupied 119,029 acres of Government, tea garden or other privately-owned land in the Assam Valley and 61,123 acres in the Surma Valley.¹

Factories are scattered all over the country and their sources of labour supply vary. Small centres generally recruit labourers from local sources, except when special skill is required. This is especially true in the case of seasonal factories, which find it convenient and economical to employ local labour; in the jute presses, however, a considerable number of workers are brought from other areas by contractors. Large centres located in densely populated areas also recruit labour from the adjacent and surrounding districts. For various reasons, however, some large centres are largely dependent on migrant labour; for instance, the bulk of the labourers for Rangoon, Jamshedpur, Bombay and Calcutta is drawn from distant regions.

Most of the labour employed in Rangoon is Indian and consists of Telugus, Tamils, Hindustanis and Uriyas. Jamshedpur, having been established in an area which was practically a virgin forest and far away from sources of labour supply, depends largely upon distant regions and provinces, especially for skilled labour. Bombay City is practically isolated and draws its labour supply from two distinct regions, (1) by sea from the over-populated and overcrowded district of Ratnagiri, and (2) by land from the Deccan, especially from the districts of Ahmednagar, Poona and Sholapur. The industrial centre around Calcutta,

¹ Compiled from the *Annual Report on the Working of the Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act* (XXII of 1932), 1935-1936, pp. 13 and 33.

although situated in a densely populated province, relies largely on immigrant labour. In the beginning, the jute mills recruited their labour from the surrounding villages, but at present the bulk of the labour comes from the other provinces, the Bengalis forming only about a quarter of the workers. Comparative economic affluence and dislike for employment in the lower ranks of labour are the two main reasons for the small number of Bengalis in factories.

The system of engaging labour for factories also varies in different centres. Migratory and local workers, specially of the unskilled type, present themselves at the factory gates and are appointed on the spot, though some are still recruited in the villages by employers' agents.¹ The most common system of engaging labourers is through supervisors or foremen, both men and women, who are variously called *jobbers*, *sardars*, *muk-kadems* or *maistries*. The workers engaged often belong to the same caste as the foremen.² The essential feature of the system is that the workers engaged by foremen are employed directly under them, so that the foreman's control over the workers remains so long as the latter retain their jobs.

Commenting on the present position regarding the need for active recruiting and the part played by intermediaries in the engagement of labour, the Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India said :

So far as recruiting is concerned, recent years have seen a great alteration. When the shortage was acute, the employer had to send into the highways and byways to obtain workers. Overseers, labour contractors and others, stimulated thereto by promises of commissions, journeyed to distant villages and brought back recruits to the mills, paying their fares and expenses to the city. Such methods are still employed for many industries, particularly planting, mining, public works and some seasonal factory industries ; but now the great majority of managers of perennial factories need go no farther than their own gate to obtain the workers they require. Only in minor centres and in the starting of new mills is recourse to the older methods sometimes necessary. Contractors are still largely employed in some factory industries, particularly engineering and metal works, but these men are not contractors so much as subordinate employers, and most of them can also secure labour at the factory gate. Unfortunately the removal of the market for labour from the village to the factory gate has not generally meant the assumption by the employer of direct

¹ *Census of India*, 1921, pp. 92 and 273.

² ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Memorandum from the Government of Bombay*, pp. 8-9.

responsibility for the engagement of his own workers. This duty is still left largely to intermediaries, and especially to jobbers.¹

The majority of mining workers belongs to the aboriginal races and is recruited from the Santhal parganas, Birbhum, Hazaribagh, Monghyr and Bilaspur. Most collieries recruit through contractors, who may either supply the labour which is then employed and paid by the mine management, or may both supply and employ the labour. In other collieries the recruiting is entrusted either to *sardars* (gangers), or to agents of the mine management. In all such cases the procedure is much the same : the recruiter visits villages where he has already a connection, makes advances, pays railway fares and brings the workers to the collieries. In some instances, *zamindars* or landlords are paid to send their tenants to the coalfields ; in others the mines maintain agents in labour districts, where they assist workers at home by advancing money for special requirements such as cultivation, weddings, etc., and thus keep in touch with the sources of labour supply.² The most important recruiting agency in the coalfields is, however, the raising contractor, who both recruits the miners and employs them, undertaking on behalf of the mine management the whole process of mining and loading the coal. About 70 per cent. of the output in Jharia and 40 per cent. in Raniganj is mined by raising contractors.³

The method of engaging workers for the railways varies in different circumstances and in different departments. The engineering departments give employment to the largest single class of railway workers, namely, gangsmen, who are generally unskilled cultivators and are engaged locally by permanent-way inspectors. The transport and commercial departments cover a wide range and workers are engaged either by station masters, traffic inspectors or senior subordinates. In the machine shops unskilled labourers are engaged locally, semi-skilled labourers through promotion, and skilled workers from outside applicants trained in particular trades or from apprentices drawn from literate or semi-literate classes and trained in the shops for periods

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 23.

² ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Evidence*, Vol. IV, Part I, pp. 9-10.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 116 and 119 ; ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Evidence*, Vol. IV, Part I, p. 19 ; *Census of India*, 1921, p. 293.

of from four to six years. The labourers and artisans in some of the shops are engaged by labour bureaux which, with the help of the works managers and foremen, also undertake the selection and rating of employees.¹ Some railway work is undertaken by contractors, who themselves engage and employ the necessary workers.

Although this Report is not concerned with seamen, some reference may be made to the methods of engaging seamen in use at the ports of Bombay and Calcutta, since this is the only instance in which the placing of labour has been organised as a result of Government intervention. In Bombay seamen used to be engaged through a single firm of licensed brokers. In Calcutta the principal company concerned engaged seamen through a special service of its own, and other companies utilised the services of the local licensed brokers. *Serangs* and butlers were selected by the officers concerned, and the selection of the crew rested mainly with the *serangs* and butlers.

However, the adoption by the International Labour Conference of the Placing of Seamen Convention, 1920, led to the examination of this system by the Government of India and the Indian Legislature in 1921. Although the Legislature did not recommend the ratification of the Convention, an enquiry into the question was suggested, and a Seamen's Recruiting Committee was appointed in 1922. After investigations in Bombay and Calcutta, the Committee found that the existing system had led to grave abuses and recommended an entirely new system with a view to eliminating intermediaries and also to the setting up of an employment bureau under officers with practical maritime experience. The Government of India gave partial effect to the recommendation, and in 1924 an officer of the Merchant Marine was appointed as shipping master to organise the shipping office at Calcutta and to examine the question of the establishment of an employment bureau. Later on an assistant to the shipping master was also appointed in Bombay to deal with the question of recruitment. In 1929 the Government of India issued an Order on the recommendation of the Seamen's Committee under which *serangs* and butlers are engaged either directly by the shipowners or through the shipping office. For the engage-

¹ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Third Report*, 1934, p. 42.

ment of lower ratings it is provided that *serangs* and butlers must present candidates in excess of the number required, and the marine superintendent or the ship's officers make a selection from the men thus presented.¹ Moreover, in accordance with a recommendation of the Royal Commission on Labour, the Government of India have withdrawn the licences of the shipping brokers at the port of Calcutta.²

EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGES

Reference has been made above to the limited use of a form of labour bureaux for the engagement of some classes of railway workers, and to the decision to examine the establishment of such offices for the engagement of seamen. According to the annual report of the Government of India on the application of the Unemployment Convention, 1919, for the year 1934, the possibility of setting up employment exchanges to cater for dock labour in certain ports is also being considered. A general system of employment exchanges, however, is not considered by the Government of India to be warranted by conditions in India. The question of setting up exchanges for the placing of industrial workers has been examined on more than one occasion, and the conclusions of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, based on reasons which appear to the Government to be cogent, were adverse to the institution of any general system of such exchanges.

The comments of the Royal Commission were as follows :³

It has been suggested that, apart from any other advantages, the establishment of employment bureaux would provide means for measuring the extent of the trouble (unemployment). We cannot accept this view, for we do not believe that a bureau, which was unable to offer any definite relief to persons genuinely unemployed, would provide any index to their numbers. Even if bureaux could offer prospects of employment to a proportion, it would be impossible for them to maintain accurate registers of the unemployed. As regards the other services which State bureaux could render, it is scarcely necessary to point out that they could not affect the volume of employment and could only increase the mobility of labour. In the present position of Indian industry, it is most unlikely that they would be in a position to offer an appreciable number of vacancies unless employers were compelled to recruit through them. Such compulsion is possible in special cases,

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 175-177.

² GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Fourth Report*, 1935, p. 52.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 35.

such as shipping, but so far as industry generally is concerned, we do not regard it as practicable under present conditions. The maintenance by employers in a single industry and centre of a joint bureau for recruitment offers less practical difficulty. Such bureaux, not in the industrial centres but in the areas from which the workers are drawn, might have served a useful purpose in the past. We do not think that it would be wise to start them at a time when most factory owners can find sufficient labour at the gates.

2. — Organisation of Employment

The organisation of labour management in India presents a number of special problems owing both to the nature of the labour force and to the conditions under which industry has developed. Not only is Indian labour still largely migratory, but it is also almost entirely illiterate ; and, if the problem of numerical supply generally has largely disappeared except for periodical shortages when industrial workers who are primarily agriculturists return to their villages for the sowing and planting of crops, or when workers are impelled to leave their improvised housing in some industrial centres during seasons of intense heat or epidemics of disease, the problem of the supply of skilled labour remains a difficult one. Moreover, the illiteracy of the workers, combined with the instability of the labour force, results in a high degree of absenteeism and labour turnover, as well as relatively low standards of efficiency. Finally, the problems of labour management are complicated by the survival of methods of management both of undertakings and of labour which originally developed partly because of the special difficulties of labour supply and partly because the founders of modern industry in India were foreigners.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The organisation of industrial training in India is immensely handicapped by the lack of primary education. " In India ", says the Royal Commission on Labour, " nearly the whole mass of industrial labour is illiterate, a state of affairs which is unknown in any other country of industrial importance. It is almost impossible to over-estimate the consequences of this disability, which are obvious in wages, in health, in productivity, in organisation, and in several other directions. " ¹

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 27.

There is, as was noted in Chapter I, no system of universal compulsory primary education in India, but provision for primary education has been made by some municipalities and employers. The Bombay municipality, for instance, introduced compulsory education in the wards which are mostly inhabited by mill workers,¹ and the Government of Madras made orders commending to municipalities for sympathetic consideration the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Labour for the introduction of compulsory education.²

Among the elementary schools set up by factory employers, the most important are those of the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras, the Empress Mills in Nagpur, the British India Corporation in Cawnpore and the Tata Iron and Steel Works at Jamshedpur. The Royal Commission found that, in employers' schools, there was a fairly general tendency to concentrate on providing education for half-timers, and, without wishing to discourage the work being done in such schools, the Commission pointed out that half-timers were rarely able or disposed to benefit by these facilities. The Commission suggested, therefore, that it would be in the interest of employers to facilitate the education of workers' children who were not employed, and thus to help in creating a better class of future workers.³

Schools also exist in the coalfields, but there is no co-ordination, and the Royal Commission found that success depended very largely on the attitude of the colliery managers. In view of the fact that children under 13 years of age could not be employed in mines, the Commission suggested that compulsory primary education should be introduced in all coalfields. The raising of the minimum age for admission to employment to 15 years by the 1935 Act gives even greater importance to this question.

The education of children on plantations presents a special problem in view of the fact that most of the plantations are located in out-of-the-way places. The Royal Commission on Labour recommended the co-operation of Government and employers for the education of plantation children on the basis of the Ceylon system, under which the estates make themselves responsible for the building, maintenance and equipment of suitable schools

¹ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Memorandum from the Government of Bombay*, p. 66.

² *Labour Gazette*, July 1932, p. 1073.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 27-29.

whenever there are resident on the estates 25 or more children between the ages of 6 and 10 years, while the Government contributes the salary of the teachers and undertakes the general supervision of the curriculum and organisation.

The lack of compulsory primary education has also retarded the growth of vocational education or conscious and purposive training for an industrial career. Although industrial schools for improving arts and crafts were started by Christian missionaries in Madras in the seventies of the last century, and technical schools of various kinds are at present conducted by Government, local authorities and private undertakings, relatively little progress has been made.

The available facilities for technical education and training, whether provided by employers, by Government, or by other agencies, may be divided into those provided for persons already employed and those open to persons who have not yet entered employment.

For those already employed in factories and workshops, the commonest method is personal study and help from colleagues and supervisors. There are also evening classes or part-time courses, and some Government technical schools have organised such classes primarily for workmen in factories or workshops. The subjects taught are reading, writing and arithmetic, followed later by rudiments of engineering ; the courses cover five or six years. Other Government technical schools, such as those at Lucknow, Gorakhpore and Jhansi, have courses for apprentices and workmen locally employed.

Railway workshops have a system of apprenticeship under which lower-grade apprentices are trained for skilled employment as workmen and high-grade apprentices are trained for posts of foremen. Lower-grade apprentices receive their training in the workshops, and if they desire further general or technical education they must attend evening classes.

The extent to which facilities are provided for the general and technical education of workers varies in different industries. While opportunities for training workmen are very limited in the textile industry, technical education for workers has been considerably developed by engineering works, coal mines and railways. Since 1921 the Tata Iron and Steel Company has maintained a technical institute which provides theoretical and practical training for workers selected for positions in the operating

departments of the works. For the coal-mining industry, lectures and classes are conducted at various centres, three years' evening courses have been instituted by the Governments of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and higher education in coal and metal mining and kindred subjects is given in university and technical schools. ¹ The railways provide area schools, a technical school at Jamalpur and a railway staff college at Dehra Dun, the last mentioned serving as a refresher course for junior and senior officers. ²

As regards persons who are not yet in employment, some of the Government technical and industrial schools provide facilities for the training of boys as skilled workmen. Special artisan courses are run in a number of schools under the Departments of Industries. The Madras trades schools, for instance, which are under the Industries Department, provide courses of technical and practical training for boys of good education in such subjects as electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, printing, etc. ; these courses are designed to turn out men suitable for employment as foremen, supervisors and chargemen. ³

Higher education in industry and technology is provided by various schools and colleges, which are either special departments of universities or separate institutions. The number of engineering and survey schools and colleges in 1935-1936 was 17, attended by 3,736 students. Besides, there were 515 technical and industrial schools giving instruction to 28,878 students. ⁴

LABOUR MANAGEMENT

Mention was made above, in describing the methods of engaging labour, of the part played by intermediaries (jobbers, foremen, etc.). Their role does not, however, end with the engagement of the workers ; in many industrial undertakings they are the main instruments of labour management. It is, indeed, a characteristic feature of industrial organisation in India that direct contact between employers and employed is comparatively rare. " There are employers who, by special efforts, have

¹ *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India, 1932*, pp. 47 and 48.

² *Report by Railway Board on Indian Railways, 1930-1931*, p. 59 ; 1931-1932, p. 55 ; 1932-1933, p. 60.

³ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Evidence*, Vol. VII, Part I, p. 9.

⁴ *Statistical Abstract for British India, 1938*, Table No. 54, including both colleges and schools.

established reasonably close touch with their workers, but they are exceptional. In practically every centre and every industry the lack of contact and understanding is evident. " ¹

This lack of contact was ascribed by the Royal Commission, in the first place, to the fact " that the management and supervision of industry is in the hands of men not only of a different class but also of a different race from those of the workers. Many of the firms which control the larger industrial establishments are British, and a still larger proportion of concerns are under British, American or other foreign management. Even where the control and management are Indian, it is the exception for the management and the workers to belong to the same race. " ² Belonging to a different race from that of the workers, the employer or manager, " brought up in a different tradition, with a different descent, in a different part of the country, indeed often in another continent, . . . is usually confronted also by difficulties of language. The imperfect knowledge of the language of their workers possessed by many who are responsible for management and supervision lowers efficiency and impairs understanding. " ³

Further difficulties in establishing contact between employers and workers are created by the forms of industrial organisation in India. The gulf between employers and workers which exists everywhere in large-scale industry is widened in India by the fact that " at the top, between the shareholders, who own the concern, and the manager, there is generally another company or firm known as the managing agents ; and private shareholders, even if they wished to take an interest in their labour, would ordinarily find it impossible to influence policy in such a matter. Much more serious, from the point of view of labour, is the tendency for managers to delegate some of their functions to subordinates and to interpose unreliable links between themselves and their men. " ³

Describing this system of intermediaries, especially jobbers, in Indian factories, the Report of the Royal Commission says :

The jobber, known in different parts of India by different names,

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 340. In a footnote to this passage, the Commission pointed out that it was not dealing here with plantations.

² *Ibid.*, p. 340.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

such as *sardar*, *mukaddam* or *maistry*, is almost ubiquitous in the Indian factory system and usually combines in one person a formidable series of functions. He is primarily a chageman. Promoted from the ranks after full experience of the factory, he is responsible for the supervision of labour while at work. In a large factory, there may be a hierarchy of jobbers for this purpose, including women overseers in departments staffed by women. He has also, on many occasions, to act as assistant mechanic, and to help in keeping the machines in running order. So far as the worker is given technical training, the jobber is expected to provide it. He is not, however, merely responsible for the worker once he has obtained work ; the worker has generally to approach him to secure a job, and is nearly always dependent on him for the security of that job as well as for a transfer to a better one. Many jobbers follow the worker even further than the factory gate ; they may finance him when he is in debt and he may even be dependent on them for his housing.

As important as any of these functions is the duty which the jobbers perform in their capacity as intermediaries between employer and employee. It is to the jobbers that the employer generally goes when he wishes to notify a change to the workers ; it is from the jobbers that he derives most of his information regarding their needs and desires...

The temptations of the jobbers' position are manifold, and it would be surprising if these men failed to take advantage of their opportunities. There are few factories where a worker's security is not, to some extent, in the hands of a jobber ; in a number of factories the latter has in practice the power to engage and to dismiss a worker. We were satisfied that it is a fairly general practice for the jobber to profit financially by the exercise of this power... The jobber himself has at times to subsidise the head jobber ; and it is said that even members of the supervising staff sometimes receive a share of the bribe.¹

The part played by intermediaries in the coal-mining industry is equally, or even more, important. As was already noted above in connection with the engaging of labour, the greater part of the output of coal in India is obtained by labour working under raising contractors.

The raising contractor receives a fixed payment per ton, in return for which he recruits the workers, mines the coal and loads it into wagons. We have found it to be generally true that workmen employed by salaried managers, who are personally responsible for their workers, receive more consideration than those employed by contractors, and we do not think that the coal-mining industry forms any exception to this rule. But there are reasons peculiar to the coal-fields which, in our view, render a system of employment through contractors, involving divided responsibility for labour, open to special objection. Both in law and in fact the manager is responsible for the safety of the workmen ; he determines where coal shall be worked and his decisions have the closest effect on the security of the miner. But

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 23-24.

even the safety men are not the manager's subordinates, being selected and paid by the contractor. The law also holds the manager responsible for compliance with its provisions in respect of hours of work, holidays, the employment of women, etc. As a rule he has also responsibility for housing and other matters (e.g. water supply) affecting the welfare of the worker outside the mine. Yet he has ordinarily no responsibility for the selection of the workers, the distribution of their work, the payment of their wages or even the numbers employed. We believe that, whatever the merits of the system in primitive times, it is now desirable, if the management is to discharge completely the complex responsibilities laid upon it by law and by equity, that the manager should have full control over the selection, hours of work and payment of the workers.¹

The Royal Commission recommended radical changes in this system of labour management through more or less irresponsible intermediaries, both in factories and mines. As regards factories, the Commission considered that jobbers should be entirely excluded from the engagement and dismissal of labour, and that, wherever the scale of the factory permitted it, a labour officer should be appointed. The labour officer should be subordinate to no one except the general manager of the factory, he should be personally responsible for engagements and dismissals of staff, and he should also assume various duties in connection with the workers' welfare. In smaller concerns, the manager himself or some other officer responsible to him should retain complete control of engagement and dismissals. Where women are employed in substantial numbers, at least one educated woman should be in charge of their welfare and supervision and should be responsible, under the labour officer or manager, for their engagement and dismissal; at present, the supervision of women is generally undertaken by male jobbers or by other women, commonly known as *naikins* or *mukaddamin*, whose rapacity is comparable to that of the jobbers. The Commission found that the system recommended had been tried with success in several Indian factories.²

The Commission also recommended the introduction of the system of labour officers in the coal-mining industry. In every important mine there should be a salaried officer directly responsible to the management for the supervision of labour, both in and outside the mine.³

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 119.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 24-26.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

If the problem of the replacement of irresponsible intermediaries by responsible officers does not arise to the same extent in connection with the railways, the management of railway labour presents a number of special questions. The majority of the railways of India is owned and managed by the State, and is under the supervision of a Railway Board, one member of which deals with staff and labour questions ; he is assisted by a Director and Deputy-Director of Establishment. The company-managed railways are under boards of directors, and the Railway Board has no power to enforce the application of its policy by these railways, although it can make suggestions which are given due consideration.

Nevertheless, while policy is determined by the Railway Board, extensive administrative powers are delegated to the general managers or agents ; in particular, the latter have full control over the non-pensionable subordinate establishment in matters of appointment, promotion, dismissals, leave, etc. In regard to appointments and dismissals the Royal Commission recommended that registers should be kept and should be regularly examined by administrative and personnel officers ; in the matter of promotion, in connection with which there was evidence of favouritism and bribery, the Commission suggested the extension of the system already adopted for some grades of selection boards. " The general adoption of regular scrutinies of registers of lower grades of labour and the appointment and promotion of as many grades as possible with the aid of labour bureaux and selection boards should greatly assist in removing causes for complaint. " ¹

The Commission also made recommendations relating to security of employment for railway servants. In evidence given before the Commission it was stated that the existing forms of service agreement were unfair, as the administration was empowered to terminate service without giving reasons, and that men were often dispensed with by discharge instead of by dismissal, thereby preventing them, as discharged employees, from exercising rights of appeal generally accorded to dismissed employees. The view of the Railway Board, on the other hand, as expressed in discharge and dismissal rules regarding the non-gazetted Government employees on State railways, was that, as

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 141.

the railway department was commercial in nature, service in it must differ from that in other Government departments and the continuance of employment must be subjected to the tests and conditions enforced by large commercial concerns.¹ The Commission, however, considered that further efforts should be made to remove causes of complaint, and recommended that after twelve months' approved continuous service, the engagement of railway servants should be confirmed and made terminable on one month's notice or payment of one month's wages in lieu of notice. Workers threatened with dismissal or discharge for any offence should be furnished with a charge-sheet stating the allegations against them, and should have rights of appeal. In pursuance of these recommendations, the Railway Board has extended the application of the rules relating to discharge to temporary non-gazetted staff borne on the non-pensionable establishments, provided they have completed three years' continuous service, while the rules relating to dismissal have been similarly extended to temporary staff who have not completed three years' continuous service.² Moreover, the agents of the State-managed railways have been instructed to withdraw from senior subordinate staff the power to discharge employees. Several other recommendations, e.g. the furnishing of a charge-sheet to confirmed employees threatened with discharge, have been reported to be under consideration.³

A special problem of railway employees is the increase of possibilities of promotion to higher grades for Indians. "Until recent years preference was shown in respect of appointments and other matters to Europeans and Anglo-Indians on all railways and particularly on company-managed railways."⁴ In 1921-1922, the Council of State passed a resolution recommending to the Government "the necessity of taking early steps to increase the number of Indians in the higher grades of service of the State-managed railways and of devising means to secure the adoption of a similar policy by companies managing State railways."⁵ The Royal Commission on the Superior Civil Services in India also made a similar recommendation in 1924. Soon after, the Government of India declared the policy of gradual

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 160.

² *Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways, 1933-1934*, pp. 63-64.

³ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Third Report*, 1934, pp. 44-52.

⁴ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 141.

⁵ *Indian Railways in 1921-1922*, Vol. I, p. 23.

elimination of racial discrimination and adopted the policy of progressive Indianisation of the higher grades of the railway service. In 1925, the Railway Board drew up a scheme for the recruitment and training of superior staff in India, aiming at a larger recruitment of Indians to the extent of 75 per cent. of the vacancies in the cadres of State-managed railways.¹

The policy of recruitment solely on the basis of merit, without regard to race or community, is modified in two directions : first, the Government of India has laid down that " no step should be taken which would produce a sudden and violent dislocation in the economic life of the Anglo-Indian community " ; and secondly, the Government of India, in order to secure adequate representation of minority communities, has adopted the policy of reserving one-third of the vacancies in any competitive examination for the redress of marked communal inequalities. Without discussing these principles, which it considered to be based on considerations which were outside its scope, the Royal Commission expressed the opinion that definite steps should now be taken which will lead in a specified term of years to the progressive elimination of any form of discrimination as regards both appointments and promotions to all grades and classes.² This recommendation was unanimously approved at the Agents' Meeting on 9 October 1931.³

The number of Indians holding superior posts in all departments of State and company-managed railways increased from 85 in 1916-1917 to 212 in 1922-1923 and 510 in 1927-1928 ; in the latter year they held 2,787 high-grade subordinate posts. In other words, about one-fourth of the gazetted officers and over one-third of the high-grade subordinates were Indians in 1927-1928.

The process of Indianisation has gone still further in recent years, as shown in the table below. There has been a decrease in the proportion of the Europeans and Anglo-Indians and an increase in those of the Hindus, Muslims and other classes among both the gazetted officers and senior subordinates. In 1935-1936, the Indians, exclusive of the Anglo-Indians, held over 35 per cent. of the gazetted posts and over 40 per cent. of the senior subordinate posts.

¹ *Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways, 1925-1926, Vol. I, p. 52 ; 1930-1931, Vol. I, p. 49.*

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, pp. 142-143.*

³ *Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways, 1931-1932, p. 60.*

INCREASE IN PROPORTION OF INDIANS AMONG RAILWAY OFFICERS IN INDIA
(ON CLASS I RAILWAYS, RAILWAY BOARD AND OTHER RAILWAY OFFICES) ¹

Class	Gazetted officers or officers of corresponding rank				Subordinates (drawing Rs. 250 per month and over)			
	1927-1928		1935-1936		1927-1928		1935-1936	
	Number	Percentage of total	Number	Percentage of total	Number	Percentage of total	Number	Percentage of total
Europeans. .	1,504	68.5	1,086	58.7	2,046	23.8	1,227	15.2
Hindus. . .	382	17.4	458	24.8	1,921	22.3	2,185	27.0
Muslims. . .	66	3.0	95	5.1	330	3.8	408	5.0
Anglo-Indians ²	182	8.3	116	6.3	3,784	43.9	3,577	44.2
Other classes.	62	2.8	94	5.1	536	6.2	693	8.6
Total. .	2,196	100.0	1,849	100.0	8,617	100.0	8,090	100.0

¹ Compiled from *Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways, 1928-1929*, Vol. I, pp. 116 and 119, and 1935-1936, Vol. I, pp. 111-118.

² Including domiciled Europeans.

LEAVE, ABSENTEEISM AND TURNOVER

It was shown in the preceding section that, except on the railways and Government establishments generally, such matters as appointments and dismissals of industrial workers are largely left to the arbitrary action of intermediaries (contractors and jobbers). The same situation widely prevails in regard to holidays and leave of absence. Few organised industries have any system of granting leave of absence with pay to their wage workers or lower-grade employees. Leave without pay is often granted on the application of the workers; but it is a general complaint on the part of workers that such leave is difficult to obtain except in the slack season. Absence without permission is generally punished with fines or dismissals. Moreover, as jobbers are in the habit of exacting bribes from newly-engaged workers, it is the practice to treat workers who return after leave of absence as newcomers. The Royal Commission found that the jobbers are responsible for much of the apparent restlessness of the workers, and that an organised holiday system would reduce labour turnover and absenteeism. The Commission recommended that workers should be encouraged to apply for

definite periods of leave, and should go with the promise that on their return at the proper time they would be able to resume their old work. Moreover, wherever possible, an allowance should be given to the worker who goes on leave after approved service.¹

The situation is different on the railways, where the rules relating to public servants are partially applied. The Royal Commission found, however, that there was no uniform system, and that the periods of leave granted differed not only from railway to railway but also from department to department of the same railway. There were also marked distinctions between higher- and lower-grade officials and also between monthly- and daily-rated employees. Workers on day rates in the large workshops usually had 15 holidays on full pay, but there were cases where the number of holidays was 6, 20 and 29 ; workers on monthly rates were found to have different privileges in two neighbouring workshops under the same administration. Revised rules for employees of the State Railways came into effect from 1 April 1930, and since then most of the company-managed railways have revised their leave rules to bring them into conformity with the rules for State railway employees. State railways have also sanctioned certain minor improvements in the new leave rules in respect of lower-grade workers and other daily-rated staff, as well as of temporary employees with a long term of service to their credit. Moreover, the agents of State-managed railways have been instructed, and those of company-managed railways have been invited, to keep proper leave records of both permanent and temporary services and to revise the leave rules in consultation with the representatives of the workers.²

" Absenteeism ", as the Report of the Royal Commission remarks, " is an omnibus term covering absence from many causes. There are few managers who can say precisely which workers are away because they are idling, which are kept away by sickness, and which have gone on holiday meaning to return. Even workers who have left, with no intention of returning, may be treated for a time as absentees. " ³

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 26-27.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 143-145 ; *Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways, 1931-1932*, Vol. I, p. 57 ; *GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : Third Report, 1934*, pp. 44 and 52.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 26.

But whatever the cause, and, as was noted above, it is certainly to be attributed to some extent to the absence of systematic provision for holidays and leave, irregularity of attendance and absence from work are frequent in India and result in a large amount of labour turnover in all organised industries.

As regards the Assam tea gardens, the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee of 1921-1922 came to the conclusion that about one-fourth of the workers were usually absent from their work. In 1921-1922, for instance, the average absenteeism amounted to 22.5 per cent. in the case of men, 26 per cent. in the case of women and 27.5 per cent. in the case of children.¹ The latest data on this subject lead to the same conclusion. The daily average labour strength, as compared with the total number of labourers on the books for 1935-1936 shows that absenteeism is 23 per cent. in the case of men, 29 per cent. in the case of women and 30 per cent. in the case of children, or 26.6 per cent. in the case of all labour combined.² According to the Assam Branch of the Indian Tea Association, the extent of absenteeism is still higher, as the figures based on two months, i.e. September and March, representing busy and slack seasons respectively, do not give an exact idea of absenteeism.³

Data on absenteeism in mines can be obtained from information collected by the Chief Inspector of Mines, who, under the instructions of the Government of India, selected a certain day in February 1937 for ascertaining the actual attendance as compared with the total number of workers on the registers in all coal mines. The absenteeism for all coal mines was found to be 8.5 per cent., and that for Jharia and Raniganj 3.3 per cent. and 8.8 per cent. respectively. The reason for the low absenteeism in Jharia was that there was a larger proportion of the labour force resident at or near the mines than in the other areas.⁴

The latest data on absenteeism among cotton mill workers in the Bombay Presidency, as investigated by the Bombay Labour Office, refer to the month of July 1926. The figures showed a great variation in incidence of absenteeism among different

¹ Compiled from the *Report of the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee, 1921-1922*, pp. 32-33.

² Compiled from the *Annual Report on the Working of the Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act (XXII of 1932), 1935-1936*, Statement VII.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 387-388.

⁴ *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India, 1936*, pp. 2-3.

classes of workers in different centres. In the City of Bombay, for instance, which employed over 70 per cent. of all factory workers investigated, the percentage of absenteeism was 7.13 among men, 11.86 among women, and 8.26 among men and women combined.¹

With regard to absenteeism on railways, no definite data are available. Information was submitted to the Royal Commission on Labour, but it had been compiled on so many different bases, and the explanations given were so varied, that the Commission was not able to draw any definite conclusions therefrom. It expressed, nevertheless, its opinion that the figures of discharges, turnover and absenteeism were higher than they should be in properly organised establishments. The Commission recommended that proper records should be kept to permit of a thorough examination of the problem with the object of improving the present position.²

A high rate of labour turnover exists in all organised industries. No reliable data are available, however, concerning the extent of turnover, and, as was noted above, it is often exaggerated by the practice of considering every worker who returns from holiday or leave as being newly engaged. Nevertheless, so long as the workers are migrants; the turnover is bound to be very heavy, and the Royal Commission found that in a large number of factories the fresh employees engaged each month was at least 5 per cent. of the establishment, thus giving an annual turnover of 60 per cent. ; in other words, in a period of less than two years, the fresh engagements exceeded in number the total labour force.³

The high rate of labour turnover has many disadvantages both for the manager and the worker. There is unnecessary expenditure for constant appointment and reappointment, and the establishment of personal contact with the workers becomes difficult when there is constant change. As far as the worker is concerned, he is often uncertain whether or not he will be admitted into the same factory when he returns from his village, and he has often to purchase his readmission. Moreover, constant adjustment to new factories, machinery and methods also involves a

¹ *Report of an Enquiry into Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry in 1926*, Bombay, 1930, pp. 25-26.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 163.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

great loss of efficiency on the part of both management and labour.¹

INDUSTRIAL EFFICIENCY

The outstanding features of industrial labour in India are its poverty and its low level of efficiency. As far as efficiency is concerned, comparative data are available regarding the production in India and other countries of given quantities of material (e.g. coal and cotton fabrics) in a given time. The Royal Commission did not consider that this information took account of all the factors concerned, but it admitted "that the Indian industrial worker produces less per unit than the worker in any other country claiming to rank as a leading industrial nation."²

This low level of efficiency is the result of a variety of causes. Industrial efficiency depends upon vigour and vitality, regular and steady attendance, education and training, efficient management and safe and sanitary conditions of work. The situation in India as regards some of these conditions has already been described, while the position in respect of others will be dealt with in subsequent chapters. Further reference must, however, be made here to the low level of vigour and vitality and to the loitering habits of many workers.

Vigour and vitality, which are the physical bases of industrial efficiency, are lacking among large sections of the Indian population. Large numbers of people suffer from ill-health arising from malaria, hookworm and other diseases, which sap their vitality, as indicated by the high death rate already recorded. Another important factor of efficiency is general and technical education, which, as noted before, is also lacking among Indian workers.

The lack of good health and education are partly responsible for the irregularity of attendance so common among Indian workers. In the earlier years, late arrival was very common, especially among women workers, and this defect is more or less noticeable even to-day. It is evident that in modern industries, where for the sake of economy the working time of machinery and mechanical power must be kept within strict limits, punctuality is of great importance. This habit of late attendance has

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 18.

² *Ibid.*, p. 208.

been explained on various grounds, such as the distance which many workers had to walk in order to reach their place of work, the early hours at which work often began and the long hours for which most of the Indian workers were formerly employed. In recent years, owing to the reduction of working hours and the commencement of work at later hours, as well as the improved transportation, there has been a great improvement in the punctuality of attendance on the part of both men and women workers.

More serious nowadays is the lack of steadiness in work on the part of the majority of industrial workers. From the earliest times they have been accused of the loitering habit.¹ A large amount of evidence was also produced before the Royal Commission on Labour to the effect that a considerable number of workers spent their time in loitering while employed in factories.² Various reasons have been ascribed as the causes of this loitering habit : (1) lack of discipline among the workers, who were mostly drawn from agriculturists ; (2) absence of suitable working conditions, e.g. light, ventilation and coolness in most of the factories ; and (3) unusually long periods of work in most of the undertakings. The shorter hours and better working conditions, which have been achieved within the past generation in all classes of factories, have, however, been accompanied by increased efficiency among the workers.³

Some indication of the state of industrial efficiency among Indian workers is afforded by the percentage of skilled workers ; in 1921, for instance, including all those employed on work requiring special technical skill and training and receiving wages above the rates for unskilled labourers, the percentage was 26.9⁴. The present proportion of skilled workers is not known ; the last census made no attempt to collect data on the subject. But there are some who think that industrial efficiency of Indian workers has steadily increased in recent years.⁵

This increase in efficiency is attributed to several causes, such as increasing facilities for technical education, gradual amelioration in conditions of work, including better sanitation and com-

¹ GREAT BRITAIN : *Parliamentary Papers*, 1909, Vol. 63, Cmd. 4519, p. 101.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 41.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 41 and 43.

⁴ *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. I, Part 1, pp. 268 and 293.

⁵ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Evidence*, Vol. II, Part 1, p. 63.

fort and shorter hours, the growing efficiency in management and supervision, including better organisation of industrial undertakings, with special reference to machinery, power and material on the one hand, and labour supervision on the other.

An important factor in increasing efficiency of labour is rationalisation, or the application of the most up-to-date methods of technique and organisation with a view to minimising waste in effort and material. Rationalisation is being introduced in India in many undertakings, but little is known about the forms it has taken except in the case of the cotton mills of Bombay and Ahmedabad, where it has mainly meant increasing the number of machines in the charge of one worker, either in the spinning or the weaving, or both departments. In Bombay City the question of rationalisation came to the fore in 1928, owing to industrial unrest ; and by the first quarter of 1934, when an enquiry was conducted by the Bombay Labour Office in 49 mills, 4 mills had partly adopted rationalisation, and 11 mills had introduced it in both spinning and weaving departments. Most of the mills in Bombay City, however, encountered technical difficulties (e.g. coarse counts, fancy cloth and short lengths) in adopting the schemes of rationalisation. Much more progress in the improvement of plants and working conditions has been made in Ahmedabad, which has recently built 15 up-to-date mills and introduced up-to-date machinery in several old mills, though the scheme of rationalisation has been adopted only in the spinning departments.¹

In the weaving department of some Bombay mills the system of four looms per worker was introduced in 1928, and six looms per worker in 1933, the latter working only seven hours a day. In the spinning department the system of two sides per worker was introduced in 1928, and that of three sides per worker in 1933. In the latter case the sider worked only seven hours a day, and was also given additional facilities such as superior mixing, fine counts and more tarwallahs and doffers to help him. The effect of rationalisation upon the spinners is best indicated by comparing the number of persons required to mind 60,000 spindles before and after rationalisation, as prepared by the Bombay Labour Office.

¹ GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY : *Wages and Unemployment in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry*, 1934, pp. 45-55, 76-83.

NUMBER OF OPERATIVES REQUIRED TO MIND 60,000 SPINDLES ¹

Count	Before rationalisation		After rationalisation	
	Ordinary draft	High draft	Ordinary draft	High draft
20s . .	1,314	834	514	469
30s . .	875	741	467	416
40s . .	927	741	406	312
80s . .	917	682	302	225

¹ GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY : *Wages and Unemployment in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry, 1934*, p. 17.

However limited the schemes for rationalisation in the mills of Bombay and Ahmedabad may be, they have already had an effect upon hours, wages and employment, as will be shown in subsequent chapters ; they have also affected the efficiency of labour, showing that under better organisation and provided with better equipment and working and working conditions, Indian workers are able to increase their efficiency.

3. — Industrial Unemployment

That there is an unemployment problem among the educated classes in India has long been recognised, and several provincial Governments have made investigations and recommendations. On the other hand, in the absence of statistics, it is difficult to determine to what extent there can be said to be a problem of industrial unemployment.

The question of industrial unemployment is in any case of very recent origin. Organised industry made almost continuous progress up to the first quarter of the present century : factory industries expanded steadily from 1892 to 1928, with the exception of the year 1911; the railway system developed almost uninterruptedly from its very beginning ; and plantations and mines, though with more variation, also made great progress. There was no problem of unemployment, but, on the contrary, a problem of labour supply.

After 1929 there was for some years a decline of employment in all branches of organised industry, as shown in the table below, but since 1934 the upward movement has been general, with some variations.

NUMBERS OF WORKERS IN ORGANISED INDUSTRY
IN INDIA SINCE 1929¹

Year	Tea-garden workers ²	Factory workers	Mining workers	Railway workers ³
1929 . .	843,623	1,553,169	269,707	808,433
1930 . .	—	1,528,302	261,667	817,733
1931 . .	801,315	1,431,482	230,782	781,859
1932 . .	796,970	1,419,711	204,658	731,979
1933 . .	786,760	1,403,212	206,507	710,512
1934 . .	822,414	1,437,231	229,381	701,362
1935 . .	811,906	1,610,932	253,970	705,656
1936 . .	—	1,652,147	269,593	712,364

¹ Compiled from official reports on respective industries.

² Refers to the workers in British India only.

³ Refers to the financial year.

The question to what extent these variations in employment indicate the existence of unemployment may perhaps be best examined by considering the conditions in each particular industry. The situation on the Assam tea-gardens differs from that of other industries. The demand for labour generally exceeds the supply, and so long as such a condition lasts there is scarcely any possibility of real unemployment. Moreover, the Assam labour force is mostly recruited in other parts of India and an adjustment is always possible between the supply of, and demand for, labour by regulating recruitment. It must also be added that, in view of the difficulty and expense of importing labourers, the Assam tea gardens often provide some kind of work for their workers when there is any depression in the industry.¹

In the mining industry there was no doubt under-employment during the depression, as many of the mines worked shorter weeks. But owing to the fact that most of the workers have secondary occupations, and there are very few classes of workers who depend entirely upon mining as the means of livelihood, it is impossible to judge from the figures to what extent there was under-employment or unemployment.

In factory industries it seems probable that there was both unemployment and under-employment during the years 1928 to 1933. Some indication may perhaps be obtained from the table showing the variations in the number of workers employed in

¹ *Report on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam, 1932-1933, p. 2.*

the cotton mills of the Bombay Presidency, but these figures are not a reliable guide owing to the absence of information about the extent to which the workers are wholly dependent on wage-earning employment.

VARIATIONS IN NUMBER OF COTTON MILL WORKERS
IN THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY

Year	Bomb City	Ahmedabad	Other centres	Total
1926 . . .	148,254	55,767	41,101	245,122
1927 . . .	145,005	57,872	42,632	245,509
1928 . . .	118,617	59,722	41,089	219,428
1929 . . .	118,368	67,564	46,155	232,087
1930 . . .	127,578	67,717	45,711	241,006
1931 . . .	135,077	78,350	47,574	261,001
1932 . . .	139,963	82,922	47,423	270,308
1933 . . .	105,488	82,318	45,495	233,301
1934 . . .	110,011	92,262	43,627	245,900
1935 . . .	133,577	97,218	48,828	279,623
1936 . . .	126,328	93,523	46,211	266,062

As regards the railways, the number of employees decreased by 107,071, or 13 per cent., from 1929 to 1934, since when there has been a slight increase. A continued decrease in railway earnings led the Railway Board to convene a Conference of the agents of Class I railways in 1931 and it was decided, among other things, to discharge the surplus employees, the number of whom was increasing every year. In order to regulate such discharges in a fair and reasonable manner and to minimise the hardships entailed, orders were issued by the Railway Board in January 1931 to follow the same procedure in all discharges and to carry them out in the following order : the least efficient employees, then short-service men, and finally those nearing the age of superannuation. These instructions were to be applied to all classes of employees except (1) employees drawing not more than Rs.30 a month, and (2) workshop employees, for both of whom special orders were issued. These orders were carried out from 1 March to 7 July 1931 ; some concession was made for due and admissible leave, etc., in carrying out the orders.

As a result of representations made by the All-India Railwaymen's Federation in 1931 and 1932 and the appointment of a Court of Enquiry to investigate certain matters in connection

with the retrenchment of the staff in August 1931, the discharges were not resumed until June 1932. Instructions were then issued for the voluntary retirement and for discharge of surplus subordinate staff and also of labourers and workshop employees, and the terms included, among other things, one month's pay as bonus and certain other considerations for those who had completed three years' continuous service. The total number of men discharged up to the end of the year 1931-1932 was 40,502, including 7,425 on company-managed railways, and the number of men who voluntarily retired was 4,250 up to the first week of September 1932.¹

Chronic partial unemployment exists among dock labourers in most Indian ports. In Karachi evidence given before the Royal Commission showed that wharf labourers were employed for only about ten to twelve days in the month, and in Rangoon the average number of working days per month was only twelve or thirteen days, although during the busy season from February to April work may be continued for seven days in the week.²

While it is possible to conclude from the above evidence that there is some industrial unemployment in India, it is impossible, in the absence of statistics, to gauge the volume of such unemployment. It must also be admitted that it would be difficult to obtain reliable statistics except perhaps in regard to the working population resident in industrial centres. Many unemployed workers still return to their home villages, where they generally have some secondary occupations, and where they are in any case temporarily absorbed by the joint-family system. Estimates of the extent to which this migratory labour can be deemed to be unemployed or under-employed can only be very approximate.

As to the future, the expansion of industry, which should normally be expected to take place in such a country as India, should make the problem of unemployment essentially one of adjustment of labour supply and demand and of methods of insurance and relief to deal with temporary unemployment or unemployment due to economic fluctuations. As regards the adjustment of supply and demand, the circumstance that much of the labour in organised industry is still migratory and that, as was pointed

¹ *Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways, 1930-1931, Vol. I, pp. 66-67 ; 1931-1932, Vol. I, pp. 61-64 ; 1932-1933, Vol. I, pp. 63-65.*

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, pp. 186 and 202.*

out by the Royal Commission, most of the industrial workers are made rather than born, provides a method of control. To prevent excessive migration of labour from the village to the town, however, it will be necessary to improve the conditions of village life, and it would also seem to be necessary to organise the labour market in accordance with modern methods to a much greater extent than at present. There will, however, inevitably be a need for the relief of temporary unemployment in normal times, and, since organised industry in India is more or less dependent upon international markets and cannot escape temporary fluctuations, there must be some means of counteracting their effects.

As far as relief for industrial unemployment in general is concerned, the Royal Commission on Labour found that a statutory system of unemployment insurance would be unsuitable in Indian conditions, for the present at any rate, in view of the fact that there was no regular and permanent industrial labour in India and that there was a high rate of labour turnover, thus making it very difficult to locate the risk of unemployment. The Commission, however, recommended that Government should examine the possibilities of making preparations to deal with unemployment when it arises, and of taking action whenever it is required, on the lines of the system devised to deal with famine in rural areas. The essence of the system is the preparation beforehand of schemes of work for the workless, and the putting of these schemes into operation when the flow of labour to test works has demonstrated the need of relief. The wage paid is a bare subsistence rate, and it is coupled with subsidiary measures of relief for the dependants and disabled. The work can be carried out by unskilled labour, and is designed to be of lasting benefit to the community. This system, which was devised before organised industry developed, and for rural areas, could be adapted for urban areas in such public works as the clearance of slums and the construction of roads and drainage.¹

For such special forms of unemployment as that of dock labourers, mentioned above, the Royal Commission suggested measures for the decasualising of the labour and for securing more equitable distribution of employment; to these ends a system of registration of dock labourers should be introduced at each main port, supervised and controlled by the port authorities,

¹ *The Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 35-36.

and assisted by the representatives of shipowners, stevedores and labourers.¹ The Government of India provisionally accepted these suggestions and, after consultation with the local Governments concerned, decided to ask all the Port Trusts in India to examine the possibility of evolving a scheme of registration in consultation with the interests affected.²

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 179-180 and 186.

² GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Fourth Report*, 1935, p. 55.

CHAPTER VI

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The regulation of working conditions has everywhere included among its primary and most indispensable provisions the taking of measures for the safeguarding of the health and safety of workers. The present chapter will survey the position in the principal groups of organised industries in India as regards sanitation and industrial hygiene, accidents and accident prevention, sickness and maternity benefit and workmen's compensation.

1. — Sanitation and Industrial Hygiene

PLANTATIONS

Health measures in the plantation industry include provisions for adequate sanitary organisation in connection with the forwarding of labour from the source of supply to the place of work as well as on the plantations. When labour was employed under indenture or contract, the terms of the contract required the employer to take proper sanitary measures and, although the contract system has been abolished, the importance of such provisions has not been minimised. The Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act of 1932 provides that, in controlled emigration areas, rules may be made regarding sanitary and medical arrangements and scales of diet for assisted emigrants and their families. The Director of Public Health in Assam has been invested with the powers of the Controller of Emigrant Labour under certain sections of the Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act of 1932 and executive orders have been issued to enable him to exercise supervision

over the health of labourers in transit.¹ The effects of the measures taken in recent years are shown in the greatly lowered sickness and death rates during the journey to the tea gardens. In 1935-1936, among 26,347 persons forwarded to Assam by the Tea Districts Labour Association, there were 166 cases of sickness and 9 deaths, including 6 infants under 4 years of age.²

As far as sanitation on plantations is concerned, the conditions differ from province to province and even from plantation to plantation in the same province. As a rule, the larger plantations, both in North and South India, have much better sanitary arrangements and medical provision than the smaller ones. But many plantations still lack adequate drainage, pure drinking water and sanitary arrangements. Moreover, few plantations have made any serious attempts to provide bathing and washing places for their labourers. Drinking the water of ordinary surface tanks or ponds, or even of running streams, is liable to cause outbreaks of dysentery, cholera and other diseases. The Royal Commission on Labour recommended that bathing and washing places of simple type should be constructed in the vicinity of house lines, on plans prepared by the Public Health Department, but the province of Assam had not yet found it possible to implement this recommendation at the time this Report was prepared.³

Partly due to the fact that most of the plantations were opened in forests and valleys, unhealthy for immigrant labour, and partly due to the lack of adequate sanitary arrangements, various diseases were prevalent in the early years and the sickness and death rates were high. Even to-day unhealthy conditions prevail on many plantations, as indicated by the incidence of malaria, hookworm and other diseases.

On almost all plantations, whether in North or South India, malaria causes most of the sickness and was once chiefly responsible for the existence of "unhealthy" gardens.⁴ These conditions have improved, but there are still plantations where 100 per cent. of the labourers are infected with malaria. That malaria

¹ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Third Report*, 1934, p. 88.

² *Annual Report on the Working of the Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act (XXII of 1932)*, 1935-1936, p. 7.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 409 ; GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Fourth Report*, 1935, p. 152.

⁴ An "unhealthy" garden is one where the death rate exceeds 70 per thousand inhabitants ; cf. *Report on Immigrant Labour in Assam, 1904-1905*, p. 7.

can be brought under control has been demonstrated by experiments on some of the plantations. Effective control of malaria would bring about a radical transformation of the health conditions of plantation labourers, and the Royal Commission on Labour recommended that more active measures should be taken by all plantation managements in regard to anti-malaria work carried out under skilled advice and supervision.¹

Hookworm is another common plantation disease. A large proportion of tea garden labourers suffer from this disease, which is mainly due to the lack of adequate latrine systems. In Assam and Bengal even the tea factories are exempted from the enforcement of the provisions of the Factories Act which require sufficient and suitable latrine accommodation. If suitable types of latrines were made available and were maintained in reasonably sanitary conditions, labourers could be educated to take advantage of them for the sake of their own health as well as for maintaining a higher standard of sanitation on the plantations. Success in this respect has already been achieved on some plantations in the Nilgiri and Wynad areas. The Royal Commission on Labour recommended that planters should carry out annual mass treatment of their labour forces for hookworm and should provide adequate latrine accommodation at least for factories on plantations.² The Government of Assam has accepted the second part of this recommendation, and the Government of Bengal has decided to take action after the Factories Act of 1934 has come into operation.³

Among other widespread diseases must be mentioned dysentery and other bowel disorders, which can be largely traced to impure water. An adequate supply of good drinking water is provided on many plantations, but on others drinking water is drawn from surface tanks or ponds which are liable to be polluted. The prevalence of disease and the high rate of mortality in the earlier years made it necessary for many plantations to provide medical attention for their workers. On the larger plantations medical arrangements are of the highest standard, and some ten or fifteen gardens often combine to maintain a highly qualified medical officer who is responsible for the medical and health work of the group. One of the best examples of modern medical

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 406-407.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 409-410.

³ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Third Report*, 1934, pp. 158-159.

provision is to be found in the Labac district of the Surma Valley, where eighteen tea gardens under different managements have built a large, centrally located hospital with nursing staff, separate wards for men and for women and children, an infectious diseases block, an operating theatre, a central store, for the issue of supplies to outlying dispensaries and a research laboratory. While dealing with all sick persons in the first place, the local dispensaries help in the speedy transport of all serious cases to the central hospital.¹

As a result of increasing improvements in sanitation and the provision of medical assistance, plantation diseases have been brought under control to a considerable extent, and there has been a decided improvement in the health of the workers. This is exemplified by the vital statistics on the Assam tea gardens within the last generation. The birth rate was very low in the earlier years, but it has reached at present the same level on the tea gardens as in the rest of the province. The death rate, which was very high in the earlier years and reached 61 per thousand² during the cholera and influenza epidemic of 1918-1919, has been reduced in recent years. In 1935-1936, the birth and death rates were respectively 37.55 and 21.26 per thousand on the tea gardens of the Assam Valley and 36.45 and 20.45 per thousand on those of the Surma Valley, as compared with 31.04 and 20.31 per thousand in the whole province.³

BIRTH AND DEATH RATES ON ASSAM TEA GARDENS IN SPECIFIED YEARS¹
(Per thousand population)

Year	Assam Valley		Surma Valley	
	Birth rate	Death rate	Birth rate	Death rate
1923-1924 . . .	31.11	22.51	30.80	23.90
1929-1930 . . .	32.60	21.77	31.11	19.43
1930-1931 . . .	31.95	22.59	32.55	21.21
1931-1932 . . .	31.97	22.16	32.82	21.43
1932-1933 . . .	36.41	21.30	36.26	19.69
1933-1934 . . .	38.87	23.55	33.12	20.08
1934-1935 . . .	36.94	22.65	33.18	22.35
1935-1936 . . .	37.55	21.26	36.45	20.45

¹ Compiled from *Reports on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam and Annual Reports on the Working of the Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act* (XXII of 1932).

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 410-411.

³ *Report of the Assam Labour Committee, 1921-1922*, pp. 94-95.

³ *Statistical Abstract for British India, 1937*, pp. 527 and 529. The figures for the whole province are for the calendar year 1933, the latest year for which such figures are available.

The need for improvement in sanitation and medical facilities, however, is still great. On the smaller plantations, medical arrangements are unsatisfactory, dispensaries poor and hospital accommodation uninviting. On some of the tea gardens in Assam no medical attention is provided. The Royal Commission on Labour, therefore, made several recommendations, the most important of which was that Boards of Health and Welfare should be established for convenient planting areas. Each Board should be financed by means of an annual cess levied on all plantations within its area and should be composed of a majority of planters' representatives, a Collector or Deputy Commissioner from the district, the Director of Public Health (or his deputy), the District Health Officer and persons nominated by the Local Government to represent the workers. The Board should have at least one woman member, and the Protector of Immigrants (or the Controller of Emigrant Labour as this officer is now called) should also be a member but without the right to vote. The Act for establishing the Boards of Health and Welfare should provide in detail for such matters as drinking water, conservancy, sanitary drainage and medical facilities, and should prescribe the minimum standards of new housing accommodation, subject to the approval of the Local Government; each Board should also be granted the power to administer maternity benefit legislation. District Health Officers should be appointed as inspectors to deal with the breaches of public health laws and regulations on plantations. Governments should retain some financial control.¹ Consideration of most of these recommendations was reserved until the coming into force of the new Constitution.²

FACTORIES

Measures for providing sanitary conditions in factories were undertaken by Government as early as 1881, when the first Factories Act was passed, and have been improved upon since then by subsequent amendments and re-enactments. The Act of 1934, for instance, provides that the factories shall be kept clean and free from effluvia arising from any drain, privy or other nuisance, and also from impurities of gas, vapour, dust, excessive humidity,

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 418-423.

² Cf. GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Third Report*, 1934, p. 88.

and overcrowding. It is also provided that a factory should have a sufficient and suitable supply of drinking water, sufficient light and ventilation and a sanitary and adequate latrine system. In order to give effect to these provisions, Local Governments have been granted powers to make adequate rules.¹

From the very outset the larger factories have had good sanitary conditions and in recent years there has been a general improvement. "There are factories", says the Royal Commission on Labour, "which would compare favourably in lay-out, cleanliness, atmosphere and general well-being with any factories in the world."² This sanitary improvement in factories has been achieved partly owing to the growing realisation by owners and managers of the importance of promoting the health and comfort of the workers, and partly owing to the stricter requirements of the law.

The above remark is not, however, of universal application, especially in the case of the smaller and seasonal factories. The latter experience certain difficulties in maintaining good sanitary conditions in establishments which are only working for a short period of time in the year. The unsatisfactory features of these factories may be summarised as follows : (1) some of them are defective in construction and are unsuited to the Indian climate ; (2) insufficient arrangements for the elimination of dust in cotton, jute and woollen mills as well as in cotton-ginning, rice-milling and tea-curing factories, where manufacturing processes give rise to a good deal of dust and may cause pulmonary diseases ; (3) lack of control of temperature, except as regards humidification and air cooling in cotton textile mills, until the enactment of the Factories Act of 1934 ; and (4) insufficient enforcement of the provisions of the law and the rules made thereunder relating to the periodical whitewashing of buildings, the cleaning of walls and roofs and the observance of cleanliness in latrine accommodation. While the last defect could be remedied by better enforcement of the law, others required legislative amendments, and the Factories Act of 1934 has gone a long way towards remedying some of these defects.

It is now some years since proposals for controlling the construction of factory buildings for the purpose of safeguarding

¹ Indian Factories Act (XXV) of 1934, section 13.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 63.

health and safety were approved by the Government of India and referred to the Local Governments. Partial legislative provision to this effect had already been made in the Cotton Ginning and Pressing Factories Act of 1925, under which cotton ginneries and presses are required to submit their building plans to the authorities for approval. The Royal Commission on Labour made similar recommendations for other factories. Some of the provinces had already given effect to these proposals, and others have accepted or implemented the recommendations of the Royal Commission. In the Presidency of Mádras, for instance, the plans of new factories are scrutinised by the Inspector of Factories under Section 194 (4) of the Local Boards Act and Section 250 (4) of the District Municipalities Act, before permission is accorded for their construction by the local bodies. Moreover, the Commissioner of Labour has been requested to consult the Chief Inspector of Factories before approving the plans submitted under the Cotton Ginning and Pressing Factories Act of 1925.¹

The problem of controlling dust is more acute in the case of seasonal factories. Most of these factories have no dust-extracting plant, although it can be installed at a reasonable price. In the case of cotton-ginning factories, the Local Governments, which have been granted power to control dust and other impurities in the air, have in many cases refrained from enforcing the necessary rules for fear that these industries might be driven into Indian States where such requirements are not exacted. Regarding dust in tea factories and rice mills, the Royal Commission on Labour recommended that the owners of existing tea factories should be required to instal efficient dust-extracting machinery within a specified period, that new factories should not be allowed to be built without it, and that in the new rice mills steps should be taken to compel the installation of the necessary protective machinery against dissemination of dust, while freer use should be made of the power of inspectors to demand its installation in existing mills.² As far as giving effect to these recommendations is concerned, some provinces have already the necessary rules and are taking action, while others find it difficult to

¹ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Third Report*, 1934, p. 104.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 85.

enforce the rules or to enact them under the present conditions of economic depression.¹

The importance of controlling temperature in factories has also long been realised, but although it had been demonstrated that temperature could be reduced at a reasonable cost, only a few factories had installed any temperature-reducing plant. In 1925-1926 the Government of India proposed legislation requiring the taking of measures to reduce temperature and empowering Local Governments to prescribe temperature standards, but the passing of legislation was postponed owing to adverse criticism by the employers. Since then some factories have spent large sums of money in installing the cooling plants both where cooling is necessary because of the existence of artificial humidification and because of the existence of other conditions detrimental to the health or comfort of the workers. In accordance with the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Labour,² the Act of 1934 granted power to the Local Governments to make rules prescribing standards for cooling in both these cases.

Sanitary conditions are, however, particularly unsatisfactory in non-regulated factories. There is, for instance, a marked absence of adequate sanitary arrangements both as regards latrines and washing accommodation, in such industries as the manufacture of shellac, which is mostly carried on in unsatisfactory buildings with leaking roofs, earth floors, and poor lighting and ventilation. There is an almost universal absence of washing and sanitary arrangements, although the dirtiness of the manufacturing process makes such provisions particularly necessary. There is a similar lack of sanitary arrangements and drainage in tanneries, where there are pools of filthy water and the earthen floors are littered with evil-smelling refuse making these undertakings even more offensive than is inevitable from the nature of the industry.³

MINES

The Indian Mines Act, 1923 (last amended by the Act of 1936), contains various provisions relating to sanitation and

¹ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Third Report*, 1934, p. 98.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 58-59.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 92, 95 and 98.

hygiene. There must be provided and maintained for every mine latrine and urinal accommodation of such kind and on such scale, and such supply of water fit for drinking, as may be prescribed in rules made by Local Governments. The Act further provides that the Governor-General in Council may make rules providing for the ventilation of mines and the action to be taken in respect of dust and noxious gases.

The problem of sanitation as it affects mining workers in India involves sanitary arrangements both at the mines and in the housing quarters. The working conditions in coal mines, which employ the largest number of workers, are in many respects much better in India than in most other countries. The coal is relatively easy to mine, as in most of the pits the seams are 10 feet thick or over, and seams of less than 5 feet are rarely worked. The main underground roads are generally spacious and the working places almost invariably allow the miner to stand upright at his work. Moreover, few of the mines have reached any great depth, those with a depth of 500 feet being exceptional. The Royal Commission found no evidence that Indian miners suffer from the diseases and disabilities met with in other countries ; miners' nystagmus is also apparently unknown.

The degree to which ventilation underground is satisfactory varies from mine to mine. The Royal Commission considered that ventilation was effective in many cases and probably in most. On the other hand, the deeper pits are apt to be hot and ill-ventilated, and the problem is also more acute where the working face is at a long distance from the shaft and in the smaller mines.¹

The greatest defect of Indian mines is the lack of adequate sanitation, as indicated by the presence of hookworm. Investigations into hookworm were made during the years 1918 to 1922. The underground water of 79 pits and inclines in 29 collieries was examined for living larvae and in 75 per cent. of the cases was found to be infected. The number of persons examined was 5,689 ; the percentage of infection was 68.85 in collieries as compared with 37.09 in villages and 18.56 in municipalities.² According to information supplied to the Royal Commission, 90 per cent. of the adult workers in the Jharia mining area were infected, although illness occurred only in a small

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 114-115.

² *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1918, p. 15 ; 1919, p. 17 ; 1920, p. 19 ; 1922, pp. 18, 19.

proportion of cases. In the Asansol area 83 per cent. of the mines examined were infected, and, 73 per cent. of the male underground workers as compared with 54 per cent. of the surface workers ; hookworm disease, however, was stated to be altogether absent.

For the improvement of sanitation, underground in coal mines, the Royal Commission on Labour suggested that bucket latrines should be provided at convenient spots, and a small staff of sweepers employed to keep the latrines clean and to remove the contents of the buckets to the surface daily for final disposal.¹ In view of the depression, it is stated to have been found difficult to implement this recommendation ; but it was suggested to the Local Governments that all mines having a resident labour force of more than 50 labourers should make sanitary arrangements at the surface and gradually extend these improved arrangements to underground workings.²

Improved sanitary conditions at the surface and living quarters, where the workers pass most of their time, are indeed as important as proper sanitation underground. Mining districts in different parts of the country were, and to a certain extent still are, liable to outbreaks of such diseases as cholera, smallpox and plague. Cholera was once an annual certainty, although the severity of the outbreak differed from year to year. Next to cholera, smallpox was the prevailing disease and appeared in periodical epidemics. Plague, although less common than the above two, was much more serious as it caused greater alarm among the workers and disorganised the industry. However, the most fatal disease was, and still is, malaria, especially in Bengal.

The frequent outbreak of these diseases in the mining districts led to the establishment of Boards of Health by Local Governments under the Mining Settlement Acts already referred to. Boards were set up in 1915 and 1916 respectively in the mining areas of Asansol and Jharia, the members being officials, non-officials and representatives of the mine owners and royalty receivers. Both these Boards have done much to control diseases and to improve sanitation and housing. In addition, a Water Board was set up in the Jharia area, and in 1924 this Board had organised a water supply system whereby one and a quarter million gallons

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 115.

² GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Third Report*, 1934, p. 39.

of water are daily supplied from the reservoirs, 16 miles away, to all collieries of importance.¹

Since the establishment of the Boards of Health, sanitation and health have greatly improved in the coalfields of Jharia and Raniganj. In 1935 the death rate was 21.3 per thousand in the Raniganj area, as compared with 22.0 for the whole Province of Bengal, and 20.43 per thousand in the Jharia coalfield, as compared with 24.0 per thousand for the whole Province of Bihar and Orissa. It must be remembered, however, that most of the workers in these coalfields are migrants, so that the above rates do not exactly reflect the demographic situation.²

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC WORKS

Health problems affecting railway servants arise mainly in connection with the railway settlements, i.e. the areas in the vicinity of important railway centres where the workers are housed. In recent years the Railway Board and the Railway Administrations have been giving special attention to the improvement of medical and sanitary arrangements. The twelve Class I railways give grants for health and welfare purposes amounting to a crore of rupees annually. About 50 per cent. of this expenditure is devoted to medical relief and more than 25 per cent. to sanitation. Each railway has a whole-time medical staff for medical treatment and for supervision of health and sanitation.³

As regards public works, the extent to which medical and sanitary provision is made varies : in some cases contractors are required to take measures regarding sanitation, while in others the determination of the scale of medical and public health activity is left to the public works authorities and the engineer in charge of the construction work is made responsible for the control of health on the work. On the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Labour, the Government of India has decided that in all cases where a large amount of labour has to be employed on public works under the Central Government, the public health and medical authorities should invariably be con-

¹ *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India, 1927, p. 35.*

² *Statistical Abstract for British India, 1935, Table No. 40 ; Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India, 1935, pp. 41-42 ; 1936, pp. 46-47.*

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, pp. 170-171.*

sulted in regard to housing and sanitary arrangements and medical facilities for the labourers, and that these authorities should from time to time inspect these arrangements and report to Government any case in which the officer in charge of the work finds himself unable to accept any important suggestions made by them. Orders to that effect were issued in February 1932.¹

2. — Safety and Accidents

Safety questions are becoming more and more important in India with the increasing use of machinery and mechanical power in organised industry, and the need for improvements in safety provisions is indicated by the fact that there occur every year considerable numbers of industrial accidents.

SAFETY PROVISIONS

Provisions requiring various measures to be taken for the safety of workers in factories were contained in the first Factories Act of 1881, and these provisions have been extended and elaborated in successive amendments of the Act. The latest Factories Act, that of 1934, provides that every exposed moving part of a prime mover and every flywheel directly connected to a prime mover, every hoist or lift, hoist-well or lift-well, trap, door or other similar opening, and every part of the machinery which the Local Government may prescribe, must be kept adequately fenced ; inspectors are empowered, if they think that any other part of the machinery in a factory is dangerous if not adequately fenced, to serve an order in writing on the manager of the factory, specifying the measures to be taken. The Act also requires the provision of means of escape in case of fire, the taking of measures for the safety of buildings and machinery, and the making of further provisions for the protection from danger of persons employed in attending to the machinery in any factory ; in these matters, too, inspectors are empowered to serve orders on the managements specifying the measures to be taken to remedy defects.² These provisions of the Factories Act are supplemented by elaborate rules issued by the provincial authorities.

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 192 ; GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Third Report*, 1931, p. 60.

² Indian Factories Act (XXV), 1934, sections 21-27.

The Act of 1934 also contains provisions, suggested by the Royal Commission on Labour in India, empowering Local Governments to make rules providing against dangers arising from the use of mechanical transport in factories other than railways subject to the Indian Railways Act, 1890, and against dangers from unsafe buildings by requiring factories to secure a certificate of stability of any building which is new or in which any structural alteration has been made.¹

Another important new provision of the 1934 Act empowered the Governor-General in Council, if he was satisfied that any operation in a factory exposed workers to a serious risk of injury, poisoning or disease, to make rules declaring the operation to be hazardous and prescribing measures for the protection of workers employed on the operation.² The main object of granting this power to the Governor-General in Council instead of to Local Governments was to ensure uniformity; the provision was made elastic in order to enable the Government to make and to modify from time to time the necessary regulations in conformity with the constant elaboration of factory processes and the steady accumulation of knowledge of the best methods of protection against dangers arising from these processes. In virtue of this power rules were made for the protection of workers in regard to such hazardous occupations as various lead processes, the manufacture of aerated waters, work with rubber solutions and soluble chromium compounds, cellulose spraying and sand blasting. Under the new Constitution, this power has passed to local Governments.

It would seem that at present the need for improvements in safety arrangements is most urgent in the case of seasonal factories. In the first place, numbers of the factory buildings are structurally defective, and dangers from this cause exist more especially in those districts where, owing to the excessive number of cotton ginneries, a system is in operation under which ginneries are used in rotation. A building which has been closed for several years may thus be brought into sudden use without adequate repair. Moreover, there is always a potential source of danger in cotton-ginning factories on account of the number of belts and pulleys connecting the roller gins and the main line shaft, and the confined space in which the operator has to work.³

¹ Indian Factories Act (XXV), 1934, sections 32 (c) and 33 (3).

² *Ibid.*, section 33 (4).

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 86-87.

Safety problems are also particularly acute in non-regulated factories, especially those working with power machinery, much of which is inadequately protected. The buildings in which the machinery is erected are often unsuitable and unsafe, protective guards to shafting, belting and machinery inadequate, and lighting insufficient. Since there is no obligation on the part of the employers to report non-fatal accidents, the number of accidents in these factories is not known, although there is reason to believe that fatal accidents are rare. The Royal Commission on Labour has made, *inter alia*, recommendations for extending the safety provisions of the Factories Act to non-regulated factories.¹

Besides the provisions of the Factories Act and the rules made thereunder, there are also other methods for promoting safety in factories, of which the most important are the following : (1) measures taken by Local Governments (e.g. the Government of Madras) as well as by employers (e.g. in the railway workshops) to minimise the risk of accidents from certain causes ; (2) the agreement among the members of the Indian Jute Mills Association in regard to standard guards and safety devices on new machinery which have been installed since July 1932 ; (3) the development of educational work in regard to safety by the Bombay Factory Inspectorate and the Mill Owners' Mutual Insurance Association ; (4) the establishment of safety committees in some provinces, e.g. the Bombay Presidency and Bihar and Orissa (in 1935, there were 33 safety committees in Bihar and Orissa and 20 in the city of Ahmedabad alone, and there were also several committees in Bombay City²) ; and (5) various methods of propaganda, e.g. safety posters in the carding departments of cotton mills in Bombay and Ahmedabad, the " Safety First " movement in the jute mills of Bengal, and the posters of the Indian Red Cross Society illustrating the most suitable type of dress to be worn by workers in certain kinds of work.³

Besides these provisions for the protection of workers in general, there are also specific provisions regarding the safety of women and children. Since 1891 the law has prohibited women and children from cleaning mill-gearing or machinery and from working between the fixed or traversing parts of any self-acting

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

² *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act, 1933*, p. 3 ; 1934, p. 4 and 1936, p. 3.

³ *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act, 1931*, pp. 4-5.

machinery while it is in motion.¹ Further, by section 20 of the Act of 1911, as amended in 1922, and by section 29 of the Act of 1934, women and children are prohibited from employment in that part of cotton-pressing factories in which a cotton-opener is at work, unless its feed-end is in a room separated from the delivery end. Finally, as already noted, power is given by the 1934 Act to make rules prohibiting or restricting the employment of women, adolescents or children upon any operation in a factory that exposes the workers to serious risk of bodily injury, poisoning or disease.² In pursuance of the provision last mentioned, rules have been issued prohibiting or restricting the employment of women, adolescents, and children in a number of hazardous occupations.

Further measures have been taken for protecting children. A considerable number of accidents used to occur every year to children who were not employed in factories, but were present with their parents or guardians. The majority of such accidents took place in the Bengal jute mills. The Factory Department of Bengal therefore issued orders in May 1932 prohibiting, with effect from 1 June 1932, the presence in jute mills of children who, by reason of their age, could not legally be employed by the mills, namely, those below the age of 12 years. The mills have readily complied with these orders and made the necessary arrangements for giving effect to them.³ Orders have also been given in some seasonal factories to exclude young children from the premises, but it has been found difficult to enforce these orders without driving some women out of employment.⁴ The Act of 1934 empowers Local Governments to make rules requiring any factory employing more than 50 women to reserve a suitable room for the use of children under the age of 6 years belonging to such women.⁵

Safety in mines is one of the main objects of Indian mining legislation. The Mines Act of 1923, which repealed and replaced the Act of 1901, empowers the Governor-General in Council to

¹ Indian Factories Act of 1911, as modified up to 1926, sections 19 and 20.

² Indian Factories Act (XXV), 1934, section 33 (4) (b). *Legislative Series*, 1934, Ind. 2.

³ INDIAN JUTE MILLS ASSOCIATION : *Report of the Committee for 1932*, pp. 15-16.

⁴ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 85.

⁵ Indian Factories Act (XXV), 1934, section 33 (2). *Legislative Series*, 1934, Ind. 2.

make regulations providing for the safety of mine workers, the means of entrance to and exit from mines, the number of shafts or outlets to be furnished, the fencing of shafts, pits, outlets, pathways and subsidences, the safety of roads and working places, including the siting and maintenance of pillars and the maintenance of sufficient barriers between mine and mine, the care and use of machinery and electrical apparatus, the use of safety lamps, the avoidance of the danger of flooding, etc. Power is also given to inspectors to order measures to be taken to deal with dangers to human life or safety, and if necessary to prohibit the employment of workers in a mine or part of a mine where such employment appears to be dangerous, until the danger is removed. The safety provisions of the Act were extended by the amending Act of 1936,¹ and the rule-making power has been exercised in the elaborate Coal Mining Regulations, the Metalliferous Mining Regulations, etc.

The Royal Commission on Labour in India found that the regulation of safety in mines was in advance of the regulation of conditions of labour, partly because the inspectorate was almost completely occupied with safety matters under the Act of 1923. The Commission considered it unfortunate that the accident rate had shown no marked or regular decline in recent years, but accepted the evidence that in collieries there had been progress in the prevention of accidents. Further reference will be made to this question below in connection with accidents.

Meanwhile, it may be noted that some further recommendations for improving safety in collieries were made by a Committee set up by the Government of India following an enquiry into a coal-dust explosion at Parbelia Colliery on 4 January 1923, which caused the loss of 74 lives. This Committee,² which made its final report in 1932, recommended (1) that some of the existing regulations should be amended with a view to ensuring that every charge of explosives should be commensurate with the work to be done, to requiring the use of safety lamps in all galleries where inflammable gas has been found during the previous twelve months, and to keeping the main haulage roads and coal depôts free from accumulations of fine coal-dust; (2) the amount of every charge of explosives should not exceed the permissible maximum and no shot should be fired in coal which has not been

¹ *Legislative Series*, 1936, Ind. 2.

² *Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1923, pp. 11, 26-27.

undercut, over-cut and side-cut ; and (3) that measures should be taken to ensure that the dust on the floor and sides should not contain more than 50 per cent. of combustible matter and to avoid the rising of dust. The Chief Inspector of Mines should be empowered to apply these regulations to any mine which is, in his opinion, liable to coal-dust explosion.¹ As a result of fires in collieries in 1935 and 1936, which caused heavy loss of life, the Government of India appointed in 1936 a Coal Mining Committee to enquire, *inter alia*, into the methods of extracting coal underground and to report on the measures which should be taken to secure the safety of those employed on this work, with special reference to the dangers arising from underground fires and collapses of workings and to the suitability of the explosives in use and storing them. The Committee reported on 10 April 1937.²

An adequate description of the measures taken to secure the safety of classes of workers, such as railway servants, which are subject to special risks, would be beyond the scope of this Report. Mention may, however, be made of the recent progress made in regard to safety regulations for dockers. Until recently there were no regulations to protect the majority of dock workers, engaged in handling cargo, against the risk of accidents. Some of the Port Trusts framed by-laws for the safety of their own workers, but the dock workers employed by private firms were not covered by these protective measures. Even the periodical testing of chains and slings used by contractors' labourers was only carried out in Bombay and Calcutta. Moreover, there was no system of inspection by an independent authority, nor was there any legal obligation to report the majority of accidents in docks.³ Regulations have, however, now been made and inspection provided for by the Indian Dock Labourers Act of 1934.⁴

INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS

Factories

Factory accidents in India, as understood by the law and regulations, include accidents of all kinds that occur to workers

¹ *Annual Report of Chief Inspector of Mines in India, 1932*, pp. 42-44.

² *Report of the Coal Mining Committee, 1937*.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 187.

⁴ *Cf. Chapter III.*

during their hours of labour within the premises of factories, whether or no they are connected with the risk of employment. Accident statistics classify accidents as "fatal", "serious" (i.e. involving absence from work for 21 days or more),¹ and "minor" (i.e. involving absence from work for more than 48 hours but for less than 21 days).²

Reliable statistics of factory accidents were first available in 1892, when there were 1,369 accidents; in 1936, the latest year for which data are available, this figure rose to 25,660, as shown in the table below. During the same period, the number of accidents per thousand workers increased from 4.32 to 15.53.

FACTORY ACCIDENTS IN INDIA¹

Year	Fatal		Serious		Minor		Total	
	Number	Per 1,000 workers	Number	Per 1,000 workers	Number	Per 1,000 workers	Number	Per 1,000 workers
1892	31	0.10	318	1.00	1,020	3.22	1,369	4.32
1912	122	0.14	1,019	1.17	3,367	3.87	4,508	5.18
1923	197	0.14	1,333	0.94	5,597	3.91	7,037	4.99
1930	240	0.15	4,115	2.69	17,429	11.40	21,784	14.25
1931	174	0.12	3,693	2.58	15,940	11.14	19,807	13.84
1932	162	0.11	3,513	2.47	14,452	10.18	18,127	12.77
1933	194	0.14	3,776	2.69	14,739	10.50	18,709	13.33
1934	233	0.15	4,440	2.99	16,114	10.84	20,787	13.98
1935	207	0.13	4,831	2.99	18,081	11.22	23,119	14.35
1936	232	0.14	5,015	3.03	20,413	12.35	25,660	15.53

¹ Compiled from *Statistical Abstracts for India* for 1892 and 1912; *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act* from 1923 onwards.

The incidence of accidents in seasonal factories seems to be lower than that in perennial factories, but the reporting of minor accidents has not reached the same degree of thoroughness in the former as in the latter. Taking the fatal cases alone, which are generally reported with an equal degree of accuracy, it will be seen that the incidence of accidents in 1936 was higher in seasonal factories than in perennial factories.

¹ *Annual Factory Report of the Presidency of Bombay*, 1925, p. 17.

² Indian Factories (Amendment) Act (XVI) of 1926, section 34; *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act*, 1930, p. 3.

ACCIDENTS IN PERENNIAL AND SEASONAL FACTORIES, 1936 ¹

Type of factory	Fatal		Serious		Minor		Total	
	Number	Per 1,000 workers	Number	Per 1,000 workers	Number	Per 1,000 workers	Number	Per 1,000 workers
Perennial . .	179	0.13	4,729	3.51	19,658	14.6	24,566	18.25
Seasonal . .	53	0.17	286	0.92	755	2.45	1,094	3.55
Total . .	232	0.30	5,015	3.03	20,413	12.35	25,660	15.53

¹ Compiled from *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act, 1936, Statements II and IV.*

There is a good deal of variation in the numbers of factory accidents in different provinces, but this is mainly due to the difference in the nature of the predominant industries in each province. The accident rate is naturally highest in provinces where most of the industrial workers are employed in railway

DISTRIBUTION BY PROVINCE OF FACTORY ACCIDENTS, 1936 ¹

Province	Fatal	Serious	Minor	Total	
				Number	Per 1,000 workers
Madras	11	499	1,351	1,861	10.8
Bombay	43	1,680	5,320	7,043	17.9
Sind	8	66	259	333	12.7
Bengal	58	1,423	5,335	6,816	12.8
United Provinces	38	447	1,652	2,137	14.5
Punjab	16	51	1,078	1,145	17.9
Burma	15	249	1,020	1,284	14.4
Bihar	23	495	2,427	2,945	33.9
Orissa	—	1	23	24	7.1
Central Provinces and Berar	4	23	507	534	8.4
Assam	13	71	417	501	10.6
North Western Frontier Prov.	—	—	1	1	0.9
Baluchistan	—	—	48	48	27.4
Ajmer-Merwara	—	3	602	605	43.6
Delhi	2	5	301	308	22.6
Bengalore and Coorg	1	2	72	75	40.65
Total	232	5,015	20,413	25,660	15.53

¹ *Statistics of Factories subject to the Factories Act of 1934, 1936, Statements IV and VI.*

workshops or iron and steel works, and where, moreover, the system of reporting accidents is more thorough.

A pertinent question in connection with accidents is that of the causes, which not only show the sources of danger, but also the method and possibility of control. The statistics on this subject are neither complete nor collected on the same basis in those provinces where they are available. Some of the Provincial Governments are of opinion that the classification of accidents on the basis of the recommendation of the International Conference on Labour Statistics of 1924 would be a great step towards securing uniformity and simplification of accident statistics, but no action has yet been taken in this direction.¹ The figures in certain provinces, nevertheless, give some indications. In 1936, in the Bombay Presidency, 2,027 accidents were caused by machinery of all kinds, 1,327 by falls or falling objects, and 1,218 by handtools.² On the important question of responsibility for accidents no information is available.

In the early days of the factory system there was a lack of provision for first-aid and immediate medical assistance in some of the factories, especially those which were seasonal or situated in out-of-the-way places. In recent years, however, there has been a great improvement in regard to medical assistance. Practically all large factories are provided with dispensaries, where sterilised dressings and other first-aid requirements are always ready. In nearly all cases injured persons are attended to by medical officers who are maintained by the factories.

Mines

Complete statistics of mining accidents and the resulting casualties³ are available only from 1901, when the first Mines Act was passed. Even then, for the first two years, the records were restricted to fatal cases, serious cases being excluded owing to a doubt as to the clear definition of the term "serious". In September 1902 orders were issued by Government defining a serious

¹ *Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Factories Act in Bengal and Assam for 1926*, p. 14; *Ibid.*, Bihar and Orissa, 1926, p. 8.

² *Annual Factory Report of the Presidency of Bombay, 1936*, p. 14.

³ In the reports of the Mines Inspector the term "accident" is used in the sense both of the accident itself and of the resulting injury. In order to avoid ambiguity, the term "casualty" has been substituted for "accident" in the latter sense in this Report. In Indian law and statistics the term "mines" includes quarries.

casualty ¹ as meaning any injury of a permanent character or any disablement causing absence from work for 20 days. ² Statistics of both fatal and serious casualties have since been recorded.

The numbers of casualties in certain selected years are shown in the table below. The high figures for 1923, 1935 and 1936 were due to the serious fires and explosions which occurred in those years.

CASUALTIES IN MINES IN BRITISH INDIA IN SPECIFIED YEARS ¹

Year	Fatal		Serious		Total	
	Number	Per 1,000 workers	Number	Per 1,000 workers	Number	Per 1,000 workers
1903	82	0.80	87	0.85	169	1.65
1923	387	1.65	344	1.46	731	3.11
1929	266	0.99	672	2.49	938	3.48
1930	257	0.98	815	3.11	1,072	4.09
1931	227 ^a	0.98	613 ^c	2.66	840	3.64
1932	200	0.98	613	2.99	813	3.99
1933	153	0.74	670	3.24	823	3.98
1934	209	0.91	692	3.02	901	3.93
1935	312	1.23	869	3.42	1,181	4.65
1936	477	1.77	1,011 ^c	3.75	1,488	5.51

¹ Cf. *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India* for the respective years.

The above figures relate only to accidents in mines covered by the Indian Mines Act, and only to those occupations regulated by the Act. As regards accidents which occur in or about mines covered by the Mines Act, but which do not fall within the scope of the Act on the ground either that they are not strictly mining accidents or that the persons injured are not employed in the mine, figures are available for fatal accidents, as such cases must be reported to the Chief Inspector of Mines. ³ In 1936, for instance, there were 36 such accidents causing the death of 45 persons. ⁴

The statistics of accidents and casualties in mines covered by the Indian Mines Act distinguish between those which occur

¹ A "serious" casualty is one which involves permanent disablement or absence from work for 20 days, or which is declared by any medical officer to be serious. Cf. *Circular of the Government of India*, Department of Revenue and Agriculture, 4 September 1902; *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1906, p. 72.

² *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1902, p. 11.

³ *Ibid.*, 1904, p. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1936, pp. 180-185.

underground and those which occur on the surface. Thus in 1936, of 477 fatal and 1,011 serious casualties, 414 and 765 respectively occurred underground.¹ Separate figures are also given for women. In 1936, 82 women met with fatal and 72 with serious casualties : 79 of the fatal casualties and 50 of the serious casualties suffered by women occurred underground.

Collieries, which employ about three-fourths of the total number of mining workers, account for a proportionate number of casualties. In 1936, of 477 fatal and 1,011 serious casualties in all mines, 420 fatal and 714 serious casualties occurred in coal mines.²

Of the causes of fatal casualties in mines, the most important are explosions, ignition of fire-damp and coal-dust, and falls of sides and roofs, which were responsible for 213, 67 and 74 fatal casualties respectively in 1936 ; the other most frequent causes of casualties were haulage accidents and suffocation by gas. As regards responsibility, the 1936 figures show that 147 fatal accidents were due to misadventure and the remainder to the fault of the deceased, fellow-workers, subordinate officers, or the management.³

Commenting on the statistics of mining accidents up to the year 1929, the Royal Commission on Labour in India said : " It is unfortunate that there has been no marked or regular decline in the accident rate of recent years, but we accept the evidence given to us that in the collieries there has, in fact, been progress in the prevention of accidents, even though it is concealed by factors tending in the opposite direction. " While the improvement in discipline and regularity of work tends to greater safety, the deepening of the mines and increasing resort to pillar extraction increases risks. The Commission considered that the presence in coal mines of excessive numbers of workers at certain periods also increases the accident rate, and that a better level of individual output with shorter hours, better discipline in working and better health among the workers would all tend to lessen the incidence.⁴

¹ Compiled from *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1936, p. 15.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 186-187.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 15 and 196.

⁴ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 130.

Railways.

Finally, some reference must be made to accidents to railway servants. The following table gives the totals of fatal and non-fatal accidents for selected years ; it will be noted that while the number of fatal accidents has decreased substantially since 1920-1921, the number of non-fatal accidents has shown an increase :

ACCIDENTS TO RAILWAY SERVANTS IN INDIA IN SELECTED YEARS ¹

Year	Fatal	Non-fatal	Total
1910	398	653	1,051
1920-1921. . . .	467	987	1,454
1929-1930. . . .	438	5,896	6,334
1930-1931. . . .	351	6,618	6,969
1931-1932. . . .	260	7,443	7,703
1932-1933. . . .	216	7,790	8,006
1933-1934. . . .	219	8,455	8,674
1934-1935. . . .	217	8,447	8,664
1935-1936. . . .	202	9,059	9,261

¹ *Administrative Report on Railways in India*, p. 11 ; *Statistical Abstract for British India*, 1923, pp. 448-449 ; *Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways*, 1931-1932, pp. 75-76 ; 1933-1934, pp. 74 and 76 ; 1935-1936, p. 8.

The above figures are exclusive of accidents in railway workshops, which are shown under factories. The fatal accidents recorded occurred mostly in connection with the movement of trains and rolling-stock, but most of the non-fatal accidents, 6,618 out of 9,059, were not connected with the movement of trains, etc. As regards responsibility, the statistics show that of the 160 fatal accidents and 2,262 non-fatal accidents on Class I railways in 1935-1936, 110 and 2,058 were due to misadventure and the remainder to the fault of the deceased, fellow-workers and others.

The above summary of the accident situation in factories, mines and railways in India shows that, while the development of safety precautions has had noticeable results, there have been counterbalancing factors at work. Among these factors may be mentioned the increasing complexity of machinery and the speeding-up of production, which have not always been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the adaptability and efficiency of the workers on the one hand and in the adoption of protective measures by the employer on the other, and, as regards mines, an

increase in the depth of mining operations. Moreover, in considering the accident statistics, account must be taken of increased thoroughness in inspection and accuracy in reporting, which have also increased the number of known accidents, and of the fact that there has been greater incentive to the reporting of accidents by injured persons since they became entitled to compensation under the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1923.

3. — Social Insurance

It is in reality premature to speak of social insurance in India. No attempt has yet been made to introduce modern systems of insurance against such social risks as unemployment, sickness, old age, invalidity, widowhood and orphanage. As regards unemployment, it was noted in Chapter V that the Royal Commission on Labour did not consider any system of insurance known to them as feasible at present in India. In regard to sickness insurance, on the other hand, the Commission considered that "all methods should be explored that may lead to the alleviation of existing hardships arising from the need of provision for sickness" and recommended, *inter alia*, that there should be Government enquiry into the matter. The Commission also recommended for examination "a tentative scheme based on separate medical provision, possibly by Government, and financial benefits in the form of paid sick leave given through employers on the basis of contributions by themselves and by the workers".¹ This question has been referred by the Government of India to Local Governments and the interests concerned for opinions.²

The present position in India, therefore, is that the provisions grouped under the expression "social insurance" are represented only by the workmen's compensation legislation, provident funds, various schemes for providing maternity benefit and some private sickness assistance schemes.

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 265-269.

² *Fourth Report showing the Action taken by the Central and Provincial Governments on the Recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1935, p. 57.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION

Workmen's compensation for industrial accidents and for certain occupational diseases was introduced by the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1923, which was amended in 1933 ; a summary of this legislation was given in Chapter III. The following information on the application of the Act refers to the period up to the end of 1936.

The Workmen's Compensation Act came into force on 1 July 1924, so that the first full year of working was 1925. The following table shows the number of cases of compensation for accidents and diseases for the last six months of 1924 and for the years 1925-1936.

CASES OF COMPENSATION FOR INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS
IN BRITISH INDIA, 1924-1936 ¹

Year	Cases				Compensation	
	Death	Permanent disablement	Temporary disablement	Total number	Total amount	Amount per case
					Rs.	Rs.
1924 ²	251	99	3,818	4,168	150,224	36
1925	590	633	10,148	11,371	644,120	56
1926	664	836	12,596	14,096	821,476	58
1927	783	978	13,455	15,216	1,111,254	73
1928	828	1,113	14,827	16,768	1,095,730	65
1929	888	1,345	16,632	18,865	1,260,164	66
1930	874	1,424	21,279	23,574	1,246,764	53
1931	699	1,271	15,519	17,489	1,066,356	61
1932	601	1,108	12,552	14,261	823,145	58
1933	526	1,037	12,996	14,559	813,949	56
1934	598	1,287	15,005	16,890	868,847	51
1935	696	1,279	21,024	22,999	1,161,465	50
1936	1,038	1,540	25,932	28,510	1,464,180	51

¹ Compiled from *Workmen's Compensation Statistics* for the respective years.

² Six months only (July to December).

Although the Workmen's Compensation Act provides for compensation for certain occupational diseases, it has in practice only applied to accidents, and the cases of compensation for diseases are very few. In 1936, only 8 cases of compensation for lead poisoning were recorded.

It is interesting to note that there were very few cases of com-

pensation paid to children under 15 years of age. The number of such cases varied from year to year, the highest figure being 51, which was recorded both in 1928 and 1930 ; in 1928 there were 9 cases of death, 8 cases of permanent disablement and 34 cases of temporary disablement. In 1936, only 30 cases, including 2 fatal and 1 serious casualty, were recorded. The small number of accidents to minors shows that the number of children employed in modern industry, and especially in dangerous occupations, is very small in India.

The amount of compensation paid for accidents to adults and minors in 1936 is given in the table below. It will be seen that the average amount paid in the case of fatal accidents to adults was Rs.714, for permanent disablement Rs.263, and for temporary disablement Rs.12 ; in the case of minors the average amount was Rs.75 for fatal accidents, Rs.543 for permanent disablement and Rs.8 for temporary disablement.

COMPENSATION PAID IN 1936¹

Nature of injury	Adults			Minors		
	Cases	Total compensation (Rs.)	Average compensation per person (Rs.)	Cases	Total compensation (Rs.)	Average compensation per person (Rs.)
Death.	1,036	740,331	714	2	150	75
Permanent disablement. . .	1,539	405,859	263	1	543	543
Temporary disablement. . .	25,905	317,084	12	27	213	8
Total . . .	28,480	1,463,274	52	30	906	30

¹ Compiled from *Workmen's Compensation Statistics, 1936*.

Reference has already been made to the administration of the law by Commissioners, who are specially appointed for the review and commutation of any agreement between the parties concerned, the recovery of compensation, the distribution or apportionment of compensation among the dependants of a deceased workman, and the award of compensation. In 1936, the number of applications for the award of compensation was 918, and that for distribution of compensation 1,350. The per-

centage of the contested cases to the total number disposed of was 59. The Commissioners were called upon to register 1,512 cases of agreements without modification and 41 cases after modification.

The settlement of claims is facilitated by the existence of the Claims Bureau in Calcutta, which handles most of the insured workmen's compensation business over a wide area, and also by insurance companies in Bombay, which represented employers in about 58 per cent. of the cases. On the whole, the employers are generally helpful in the settlement of compensation cases. There is, however, a tendency for small employers, who are reluctant to insure their liability under the Act, to contest cases on inadequate grounds, and this tendency may increase as a result of the extended definition of the term "workman" introduced by the amending Act of 1933.

There has been a lack of adequate knowledge on the part of workmen regarding their legal rights in claiming compensation, but this difficulty is being gradually overcome. In some localities trade unions are helping workmen to obtain compensation. Among the unions which are mentioned as being specially helpful to the workers with regard to securing compensation are the Indian Seamen's Union, the Workers' Claims Bureau and the Press Employees' Association (Calcutta), the National Seamen's Union in Bombay, and the Textile Labour Association in Ahmedabad.¹

PROVIDENT FUNDS

Provident fund systems have long been in existence in India, but they are usually found operating only in undertakings which are directly or indirectly supported by Governments or municipalities. The railways, for instance, have a well-developed system of provident funds for considerable numbers of their servants. Some large-scale private undertakings, however, have also established provident funds, but no complete information on this subject is available. As examples of such funds may be mentioned the provident funds organised by the Empress Mills at Nagpur and the Tata Iron and Steel Company at Jamshedpur. In the former case, nearly one-half of the workers contribute to the

¹ *Workmens' Compensation Statistics*, 1936, p. 2.

funds at the rate of one anna per rupee per month.¹ The Tata Iron and Steel Company introduced the provident fund system in 1920 and the membership rose to 16,611 by 1933 ; the annual expenditure amounted to Rs.14.54 lakhs in 1936-1937. Any employee drawing a monthly salary of Rs.15, or its equivalent in daily rates, can become a member by paying one-twelfth or one-twenty-fourth of his annual earnings. The Company contributes an equal amount and the whole sum is placed to the credit of the worker, bearing interest at the rate of 6 per cent. per annum.²

According to the report of the Royal Commission on Labour, provident funds have been established on every railway in India, except one employing only 2,278 workers. Under the State Railway Provident Fund Rules, workshop and shed workers are eligible for membership if they are entitled to a month's notice of termination of service and have completed three years' continuous service. Other permanent non-pensionable railway servants are eligible to subscribe to the Fund, provided their pay amounts to Rs.15 or more per month, but lower-grade railway servants are not allowed to subscribe to the State Railway Provident Fund on any terms. On Company-managed railways, on the other hand, all members of the staff, except daily-rated workers, are treated very much alike and are usually eligible for membership if they receive not less than Rs.15 a month. The effect of the various restrictions in force is to exclude the majority of railway servants from membership of the provident funds. In 1930, for instance, out of 819,058 railway servants, only 255,207, or 31 per cent., actually subscribed to provident funds.

The Royal Commission on Labour recognised the difficulties in the way of low-paid railway servants subscribing to a provident fund, but felt that existing conditions no longer warranted the distinctions drawn against lower-grade railway servants and daily-rated workers ; they recommended that, on completion of one year's continuous service, all railway servants should be eligible to join a provident fund, membership being optional for those whose emoluments were less than Rs.20, but compulsory for all drawing Rs.20 or over, instead of Rs.30 per month, which

¹ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Evidence*, Volume XI, p. 202.

² THE TATA IRON AND STEEL COMPANY, LTD. : *Welfare Report, 1929-1933*, pp. 12-13. *Report on the Conditions affecting the Labourers of the Jamshedpur Works of the Tata Iron and Steel Co., Ltd, Jamshedpur, 1937*, p. 4.

was the usual rule. ¹ The consideration of this proposal has been postponed indefinitely on financial grounds. ²

MATERNITY BENEFIT

The views and suggestions of the Royal Commission on Labour in regard to the introduction of legislation providing for compulsory maternity benefit schemes were summarised in Chapter III, together with the existing provincial legislation on the subject. The present section will be limited to a brief description of some existing voluntary schemes and of the results of the working of provincial laws.

The need for maternity benefits in India is, if possible, even greater than in other industrial countries, for, as was seen in Chapter II, practically all Indian women workers are married. Indeed, although no precise data exist on the number of maternity cases in organised industry in India, some recent enquiries in Bombay found that there were 12.34 maternity cases per 100 women workers per annum, as compared with 10 maternity cases per 100 women among all classes in that city. It was also found that more than half of the expectant mothers left the place of work two months before confinement. ³

Voluntary maternity benefit schemes have been set up in a number of industries. As regards the plantation industry, most of the large tea gardens in Assam and Bengal grant maternity benefit in some form or other. The Royal Commission found that in Assam, for instance, benefit may take the form of a lump sum or of an allowance for 4 to 8 weeks before and 4 to 8 weeks after childbirth. Most gardens also pay the wages of one or more *dais* (midwives) to attend confinements, though these *dais* are, as a rule, not trained. However, it has also been reported that, as the benefits paid are not equal to the wages which the women workers can earn, they often prefer to continue working as long as possible, and that several gardens stopped paying benefits during the depression. ⁴

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 151-153.

² *Fourth Report showing the Action taken by the Central and Provincial Governments on the Recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1935, p. 41.

³ The investigation was made by the Bombay Labour Office. Cf. *Labour Gazette* (Bombay), 1924, pp. 384-393.

⁴ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 412; *Report of a Tour in Assam Tea Gardens in 1932*, by Dr. M. I. BALFOUR, p. 2.

The granting of maternity benefit to the women workers in the jute mills of Bengal was taken up in 1929 by the Indian Jute Mills Association, which recommended the idea to its members and appointed an investigator to devise schemes. By 1931, out of 64 mills, 53 had adopted a maternity benefit scheme. The number of women who received benefits was 958 in 1929, 2,142 in 1930, and 2,380 in 1931. The amount of benefit varied in different mills; in 5 mills it equalled the wages earned, in 42 mills the benefit was at the rate of Rs.2-4-0 per week, and in others the rate varied from Rs.2-1-0 to Rs.3 per week. The duration of benefit was four weeks in 48 mills.¹

As stated in Chapter III, only five provinces, Bombay, the Central Provinces, Madras, Delhi and Ajmer-Merwara have adopted measures providing for maternity benefit schemes for women workers in factories. The results of the administration of the Maternity Benefit Acts in the Provinces of Bombay, Madras and Central Provinces in 1936 are given below. No data are available for Delhi and Ajmer-Merwara.

ADMINISTRATION OF MATERNITY BENEFIT ACTS IN SOME PROVINCES, 1936¹

Province	Average daily number of women employed	Number of women claimants	Number of women receiving benefit ²	Claims granted per 100 women employed ³	Average amount of benefit per claim
					Rs. a. p.
Bombay. . . .	44,171	4,539	4,310	9.75	24 1 8
Madras ³	30,324	1,269	946	3.1	22 6 9
Central Provinces and Berar . .	4,866	572	513	10.5	17 2 7

¹ Compiled from the annual reports on the administration of the Factories Act in the respective provinces for 1936.

² Including persons other than mothers under section 7 of the Bombay and Madras Acts.

³ The average daily number of women employed in factories, both perennial and seasonal, was 46,070 in 1936, and of these only 30,324, employed in perennial factories, were entitled to benefit as provided by the Madras Act.

Incidentally, the statistics of maternity benefit throw some light on the question of maternity, mortality among women workers in the textile industry. In 1932-1933, for instance, only 41 of the 5,790 benefits were paid to persons other than the mothers concerned. According to Dr. Balfour, who has con-

¹ *Report of a Survey of Women Workers in Jute Mills in 1931-1932*, p. 9.

ducted an independent enquiry, the confinements are usually of a normal nature among industrial women. The Maternity Benefit Acts seem to have been of great value to factory women in securing adequate rest and a measure of financial assistance. ¹

SICKNESS BENEFIT

Only a small number of Indian workers, other than those in Government service, are covered by sickness benefit schemes. The Royal Commission on Labour summed up the situation as follows :

Government and many private employers already provide medical facilities. In addition, most Government establishments make provision for the grant of leave with pay which can be utilised when the worker is sick. A few employers make some provision for the grant of sick pay and allowances, e.g. the Bihar and Orissa Government stated in 1929 that in the Jharia and Raniganj coalfields, out of 214 working mines, 68 paid sickness allowances. ²

In regard to plantations, the Commission noted that " on certain plantations the worker, when ill in hospital, is given free food, and a gratuity is paid to a relation acting as sick attendant. " ³

The great need of the workers in India for some kind of provision during sickness was, however, fully recognised and emphasised by the Commission, and, as noted above, the recommendations of the Commission were referred by the Government of India to Local Governments and the interests concerned for their consideration.

¹ *Labour Gazette*, November 1933, p. 190.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 267-268.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 412.

CHAPTER VII

HOURS OF WORK

An account has been given in Chapter III of the provisions of the law relating to hours of work and of the scope of legal limitation. The purpose of the present chapter is to summarise the available information in regard to actual working hours both in industries subject to legal limitation and those in which hours are not regulated. Reference will also be made to the law and practice in respect of spreadover, breaks, rest days, exemptions and overtime.

1. — Hours on Plantations

When employment on plantations, especially on the Assam tea gardens, was under indenture, the hours of work of labourers was limited by law. Thus the Act of 1865 limited the work of labourers under contract to 9 hours a day, and this limitation of the hours of work of the indentured labourers set the standard also for the non-indentured labourers, the number of whom gradually increased. At the present time, there is no legal limitation of working hours, but in practice, although there is considerable elasticity, there appears to be no tendency to work long hours.

The workers in the Assam tea gardens are for the most part on piece work. Under one, and the older, system, they are required to complete a standard daily task called the *hazira*, and this task takes the average worker from four to five hours ; after the completion of the *hazira*, the workers are free to undertake additional tasks, usually known as *ticca*, which are paid for at overtime rates. Under another system, called the "unit system", which has largely replaced the old *hazira* and *ticca* system, the workers can complete as many unit tasks as they choose. The length of the working day is reported to be about 8 hours under both systems, and is often less owing to the irregularity of attendance of the workers. The working day is, of course, longer in

the busy season than in the slack season. It must also be mentioned that, besides their regular work on the plantations, most of the workers who have settled on or near the tea gardens must also attend to their own gardens, especially in the planting and harvesting seasons. ¹

The position is similar in the plantations of Bengal. The standard task is here a shorter *hazira*, and it is stated that the average worker can complete the first and second *hazira* in about $3\frac{1}{2}$ and $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours respectively; three *haziras* normally take about $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours, but in a few instances workers are said to be able to complete four or even five *haziras* in one day. Generally, in the plucking season, i.e. from April to November in Bengal, actual work is stated to last for about 8 hours per day, i.e., from 7.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. with an hour of rest at midday. In the non-plucking season, when garden work consists chiefly of pruning and cultivation, the day's work can be easily completed in about 6 hours, exclusive of the midday rest. ² In South India the hours of work are also 8, extending from 7.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. with a mealtime break of an hour or so at noon. ³

Women work practically the same number of hours as men, as do also children where they are employed; no measures have yet been taken to regulate the hours of work of children on plantations. The work of children is, however, generally light and is often done leisurely.

2. — Hours in Factories

The situation as regards hours of work in factories in India varies both in law and practice in accordance with the group to which they belong, i.e. whether they are perennial, seasonal or non-regulated. It is therefore necessary to examine these three groups of factories separately.

PERENNIAL FACTORIES

In the early days of the factory system, the only limitation on hours of work was the limitation of the hours of daylight; although the hours of work of women were limited to eleven in

¹ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA, 1931 : *Evidence*, Vol. VI, p. 18, and p. 73; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 383-384.

² ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA, 1931 : *Evidence*, Vol. VI, p. 84.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 400.

the day by the amending Act of 1891, those of men remained unregulated. When, at the beginning of the present century, some of the Indian mills in Bombay installed electric lighting, they worked from 12½ to 16 hours a day.¹ These excessive hours were brought under control by the Indian Factories Act of 1911, which limited the working hours of men in textile factories to 12 a day. Such long hours, however, were rarely worked except in seasonal factories, where the work was limited to a few months of the year.

The demand for shorter hours came from the workers themselves, and in accordance with the conditions of settlement of a strike, the Bombay Mill Owners' Association introduced a 10-hour day in 1920. In 1921 about 87 per cent. of the men employed in cotton mills in the City and Island of Bombay worked 10 hours a day.² The legal position created by the amending Factories Act of 1922 was that hours of work were limited to 60 a week and 11 a day in all factories; the Factories Act of 1934 has maintained the 60-hour week and 11-hour day for seasonal factories, but has reduced the hours to 54 a week and 10 a day in all perennial factories, except in those where the process is continuous and where a 56-hour week is permitted.³

According to an enquiry made by the Bombay Labour Office in August 1923, the average daily hours of work in cotton mills in the Bombay Presidency were as shown in the following table :

AVERAGE DAILY HOURS OF WORK IN THE COTTON MILLS
OF THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY, AUGUST 1923¹

Centre	Average daily hours of work		
	Men	Women	Children
	h. m.	h. m.	h. m.
Bombay City	10 0	9 30	4 40
Ahmedabad	10 0	9 50	5 0
Sholapur	10 0	10 0	5 0
Other centres	10 20	9 50	7 06

¹ GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY : *Report on an Enquiry into the Wage and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry in 1923*, Bombay, 1925, p. 22.

² GREAT BRITAIN : *Parliamentary Papers*, 1908, Vol. 74, Cmd. 42, 92, pp. 34 and 82.

³ *Report on the Enquiry into Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry*, Bombay, 1923, p. 18.

⁴ *Indian Factories Act (XXV)*, 1934, sections 34 and 36.

An enquiry made by the Bombay Labour Office into the hours of work in the cotton mills of Bombay City in July 1926 found that the average hours of work in 17 representative mills were found to be 10 per day.¹ Hours in Bombay cotton mills were reduced after the passing of the 1934 Act to 9 a day, and in other centres, the textile factories generally work 6 days in the week and 9 hours a day. A single shift is generally the rule, but some mills also work a double shift. At the beginning of December 1937, 47 cotton mills in Bombay City and 57 cotton mills in Ahmedabad worked night shifts, the number of men employed on night work being respectively 45,480 and 33,527.²

The hours of work in jute mills are regulated by the Indian Jute Mills Association, within the limits laid down by law, according to the needs of the trade. The number of hours depends upon the number of days the mills are working during the week, and also upon the nature of the shift system.³ Except for a few shorter or longer periods, the practice of the mills since the war has been to limit working to 5 days or 4 days a week. As regards shifts, the Bengal jute mills were until 1931 divided into "single-shift" and "multiple-shift" mills. All the mills opened at 5.30 a.m. and closed at 7 p.m. In the single-shift mills, however, work was stopped for $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours at noon, while the multiple-shift mills worked $13\frac{1}{2}$ hours continuously on a system of overlapping multiple shifts, the workers being divided into different groups whose rest intervals fell at different times. Weekly hours of work in the single-shift mills, which worked 5 days a week, were 54; under the multiple system, with the mills working continuously for $13\frac{1}{2}$ hours on 4 days a week, the work was so arranged that in theory no person worked more than 11 hours a day or 44 hours a week.³

The Royal Commission on Labour found that there were various objections to the multiple-shift system. The rest intervals bore no necessary relation to meal times, so that where different members of a family worked in different departments it was unlikely that they could take their meals together. The system was so complicated that supervision was extremely difficult and there

¹ *Report of an Enquiry into the Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry in 1926* (Bombay Government Press, Bombay, 1930), p. 18.

² *Labour Gazette*, December 1937, p. 268.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 38 and 48.

were many infringements. It was stated that an appreciable number of the workers shown in the registers had no existence in fact. Non-existent workers were credited with pay which was divided between the clerks, jobbers and men who did the extra work ; the proportion of such " dummies " was estimated at $7\frac{1}{2}$ or 10 per cent. of the total. This practice not only lengthened daily hours beyond the legal limit in the case of adult workers but also in the case of children, and it was reported that in some mills children were working as many as 11 or 12 hours a day. The Royal Commission, therefore recommended that the Provincial Government should have power to control the overlapping shift system.¹

In 1931, however, all the jute mills included within the membership of the Indian Jute Mills Association adopted the single-shift system and decided to work 40 hours a week. The system was not applied in the same way in all mills : some worked 10 hours a day for 4 days a week, while others worked 8 hours a day for 5 days a week. The situation is now greatly changed. In 1936, the mills within the membership of the Indian Jute Mills Association worked 54 hours a week, while non-Association mills worked from 72 to 144 hours a week. No information is available regarding the hours worked by individual workers in the latter cases.²

According to the information collected by the Royal Commission, a short normal working week is practically universal in the engineering trades. In engineering workshops the normal week is 50 hours or shorter, with an arrangement for a half-holiday on the last day of the week, especially in Bengal. Hours of work are 8 a day or slightly shorter in metal works which do not operate continuously. Overtime is not infrequent, but even with overtime the average weekly hours appear to be substantially below the legal maximum.³

In a considerable number of factories running continuously, e.g. iron and steel works, larger sugar factories, coke factories, electricity generating stations, water works and gas works, the system of three 8-hour shifts is in operation. Each shift has a

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 49-51.

² *Annual Report on the Administration of the Indian Factories Act in Bengal*, 1933, p. 2, and 1936, p. 8. INDIAN JUTE MILLS ASSOCIATION : *Report of the Committee*, 1935, pp. 39-40.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 39.

fortnightly holiday, so that the hours worked are 56 and 48 in alternate weeks, giving an average of 52 hours.

In the early days of the factory system the hours of work were the same for women as for men in all factories. In 1891, however, women's hours of work were restricted to 11 a day, and in 1922 the limitation to 60 a week was added. As a matter of fact, these long hours were rarely worked by women except in seasonal factories, which were also subjected to the limitation to 60 hours a week in 1922. According to the enquiry made by the Bombay Labour Office, the average hours of work in the Bombay Presidency (including the State of Baroda, which is not covered by the Indian Factories Act) were 9 hours 36 minutes in August 1923. A similar enquiry in July 1926 showed that women worked 8 hours in one mill, $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours in two mills, 9 hours in three mills, $9\frac{1}{2}$ hours in one mill, and 10 hours in nine mills.¹

The following table shows for 1936 the numbers and percentages of perennial factories in which the men and women employed worked 42 hours or less, more than 42 but not more than 48 hours, and more than 48 hours :

HOURS OF WORK IN PERENNIAL FACTORIES IN INDIA, 1936¹

Classes of workers	Total number of factories employing men or women	Factories in which normal weekly hours were :					
		Not above 42		Above 42 and not above 48		Above 48	
		Number	Per cent. of total	Number	Per cent. of total	Number	Per cent. of total
Men . .	551	309	5.6	1,243	22.5	3,969	71.9
Women .	2,851	345	12.1	508	17.9	1,998	70.0

¹ Compiled from *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act, 1936*, Statement V-A.

Under the Factories Act of 1911, as amended in 1922, the legal hours of work of children between the ages of 12 and 15 were 36 a week in all factories, but the actual hours were much shorter. According to the enquiry of the Bombay Labour Office, already referred to, the average daily hours of work of children

¹ *Report of an Enquiry into Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry in 1926*, Bombay, 1930, p. 18.

in cotton mills in August 1923 were 4 hours 40 minutes in Bombay City, 5 hours in Ahmedabad and Sholapur, and $5\frac{1}{2}$ hours in the State of Baroda, and 5 hours 6 minutes in other centres, the average hours of work in all the factories in the Presidency being 5.

As already stated, the statutory daily maximum of working hours for children has now been reduced to 5 by the Factories Act of 1934. Moreover, the number of factories employing children has also decreased; in 1936 only 617 perennial factories employed children.¹

SEASONAL FACTORIES

Up to 1922 the special position of seasonal factories, which work only for a short period in the year when the agricultural products which they treat are harvested, was recognised by the factory law, and they were granted a good deal of latitude both by the law and the administration. This distinction between seasonal and perennial factories was not maintained in the Indian Factories (Amendment) Act of 1922, although the former were granted a wider range of exemptions than the latter. But as the power of exemption was interpreted and executed by different provincial Governments, the law became somewhat arbitrary and ambiguous. The Indian Factories Act of 1934 has, therefore, again made a distinction between seasonal and non-seasonal factories, and has retained a 60-hour week and an 11-hour day for male workers in seasonal factories, while reducing the hours of work to 54 a week in perennial factories.

In earlier years the hours of work in seasonal factories, especially in cotton-ginning and baling factories, were often excessive, extending in some cases to 16 or 17 hours a day. This does not mean that such long hours were worked by each individual worker, for it was the practice to maintain, in addition to the regular workers, a certain number of extra workers to relieve the regular workers, whenever necessary.² The present position is shown in the table below relating to the year 1936.

In 1936 the numbers and percentages of seasonal factories in which men and women worked 48 hours or less, more than

¹ *Statistics of Factories Subject to the Factories Act, 1936*, p. 31.

² GREAT BRITAIN : *Parliamentary Papers*, 1888, Vol. 77, H. of C., 321, p. 13.

48 but not more than 54 hours, and more than 54 hours, were as shown in the following table :

HOURS OF WORK IN SEASONAL FACTORIES IN INDIA, 1936 ¹

Classes of workers	Total number of factories employing men or women	Factories in which normal weekly hours were :					
		Not above 48		Above 48 and not above 54		Above 54	
		Number	Per cent. of total	Number	Per cent. of total	Number	Per cent. of total
Men . .	3,608	952	26.3	446	12.4	2,210	61.3
Women .	2,955	1,032	34.9	303	10.2	1,620	54.9

¹ Compiled from *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act, 1936, Statement V.*

NON-REGULATED FACTORIES

Nothing is definitely known as to the length of the hours of work in non-regulated factories, but as far as adult workers are concerned these hours do not seem to be unduly long. "Generally speaking", reported the Royal Commission on Labour, "the hours of adult workers in places of this kind are not excessive." ¹

The hours of work of children are, however, excessive in many non-regulated factories. "In such places", said the Royal Commission on Labour, "there has hitherto been no regulation as to either the starting age or the maximum hours of labour and a considerable volume of employment exists throughout the country of children of tender years for excessive hours." ² In *bidi* (cigarette) factories, for instance, boys as young as 5 years of age were to be found working as many as 10 or 12 hours a day without adequate meal intervals or rest days ; in carpet factories young boys were found working as long as daylight and the need of rest intervals permitted ; in tanneries, boys worked 12 or even more than 12 hours and their hours of work sometimes exceeded those of adults, owing to the fact that they were required to do additional work, such as carrying water. Excessive hours of work for children also prevail in other non-regulated factories. ³

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 101.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 98 and 101.

It must, however, be pointed out that in those undertakings which do not employ machinery, the pace of work is slow and the discipline is not strict. The Royal Commission on Labour, therefore, recommended that the hours of work for children in these undertakings should be limited to seven a day.¹ This recommendation has been carried out in the Central Provinces Unregulated Factories Act, 1937, which also limits the hours of adult workers to ten in the day (see Chapter III).

NOMINAL AND ACTUAL HOURS

In considering the question of hours of work in factories in India, it is important to bear in mind that the hours actually worked differ greatly from the nominal hours spent in factories. All classes of factory workers in India are in the habit of stopping work frequently and going out to smoke, take refreshment, etc. Even meals are more often taken during the nominal working hours than during the statutory intervals. Various estimates have been made of the actual hours worked, ranging from 7 hours out of 10 nominal hours, as estimated by the Ahmedabad Mill Association, to 8 or 8½ hours a day, as estimated by the Bombay and Cawnpore mill owners.² The average number of hours thus lost would amount to about one-quarter of the total hours nominally spent in factories. Commenting on the loitering habits of the workers — habits which are particularly noticeable in the cotton mill industry — the Royal Commission stated that “the unauthorised intervals are a form of self-defence against overwork”. The Commission was satisfied that closer attention to work and stricter supervision could be obtained where shorter hours were worked.

3. — Hours in Mines

Although some aspects of conditions of work in mines had been regulated since 1901, when the first Indian Mines Act was passed, there was no restriction on hours of labour until 1923. In that year, as a result of the inclusion in the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919, of a provision for a 60-hour week

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 101.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

for mines in British India, a new Indian Mines Act was passed which limited the weekly hours to 60 above ground and 54 underground. There was, however, no limitation of daily hours of work, and in some cases the same workers remained underground for 16 or 17 hours at a stretch. The amending Act of 1928 provided, however, that no mine should remain open for more than 12 hours in any consecutive period of 24 hours unless work was organised in shifts not exceeding 12 hours. Finally, the Act of 1935 has reduced weekly hours to 54 for work above ground and daily hours to 10 for work above ground and 9 below ground.

The maximum hours of work permitted by law are, however, rarely worked in most mines. In the larger metalliferous mines work is arranged on a system of 8-hour shifts. The Royal Commission found that the mica mines and some iron mines in Bihar and Orissa worked two 8-hour shifts, and the hours of work in the manganese mines in the Central Provinces were said to average 7 to 8 a day.¹ In the oil fields of the Burma Oil Company, the normal week was one of 56 hours, worked either in 8-hour shifts or in five 10-hour days, with a short Saturday. Some 15 per cent. of those employed worked 8-hour shifts on continuous processes, without a rest day.²

In 1936, in the various classes of mines covered by the Mines Act, the weekly hours of men varied from 34 to 50 for underground work, from 36 to 54 for work in open workings, and from 39 to 53 for surface work. The hours of work in the coal mines

WEEKLY HOURS OF DIFFERENT CLASSES OF MEN WORKERS
IN THE JHARIA COALFIELD, 1936¹

	Overmen ² and sardars	Miners	Loaders	Skilled labour	Unskilled labour
Underground	49	44	44	47	46
Open workings	47	45	45	46	47
Surface	53	—	—	52	50

¹ *Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India, 1936*, pp. 106-107.

² Including foremen and mates in the case of underground and open workings and representing only clerical and supervising staff in the case of surface work.

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 124.

² *Ibid.*, p. 111.

of Jharia, which employ by far the largest number of mining workers, are shown above. The most important classes of workers are the miners and loaders, and their hours of work do not amount to more than 44 a week underground and 45 in open workings. The hours of work in the Raniganj field are practically the same as in the Jharia field.

As in the case of men, there were no restrictions upon the hours of work of women in mines until 1923. Under the 1923 Act the maximum hours were the same for women as for men, i.e. 54 hours a week for work underground and 60 hours a week for surface work. The actual hours were, however, much shorter than the legal hours. In 1936, the weekly hours of work of women in different classes of mines varied from 25 to 49 underground, from 38 to 49 in open workings, and from 27 to 51 on the surface.¹ The weekly hours of work of women in the Jharia and Raniganj coalfields, where most women were employed, were not above 45 underground, 50 in open workings and 50 on the surface, as the following table shows :²

WEEKLY HOURS OF WOMEN WORKERS IN JHARIA AND RANIGANJ
COALFIELDS, 1936¹

Coalfield	Underground	Open workings	Surface
Jharia	44	45	50
Raniganj	45	48	49

¹ Compiled from *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India, 1936*, pp. 106-107.

There is no special limitation of the hours of work of adolescents in mines, but, as already stated, the Act of 1935 raised the minimum age to 15 years and required a certificate of fitness in the case of boys between 15 and 17 years of age. The actual hours of work of the few adolescents employed may be presumed to be practically the same as those of adults.

¹ *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India, 1936*, pp. 106-107.

² As already stated, the number of women employed underground has been gradually reduced under the 1929 Regulations, and such employment came to an end entirely on 1 October 1937.

4. — Hours in Transport

The methods of arranging hours of work naturally differ widely in the various transport industries. In this section, therefore, the position in regard to railways, docks, and tramway and motor-bus services will be examined separately.

RAILWAYS

As far as the regulation of working conditions is concerned, railway servants fall into two main groups : those who are employed in railway workshops covered by the Factories Act, and those who are employed under the Railways Act. Some 25,000 miners are employed by the railways in their collieries ; their hours of work are the same as those of miners generally. Further, a certain number of labourers are employed on the railways by contractors, but their conditions of work are not subject to legal regulation and no information is available in regard to their hours of work.

It is impossible to give the exact proportion of railway servants covered by the Railways Act, but in 1935-1936, of 676,807 servants employed on all Class I railways, 474,801 or over 70 per cent. came under the Act.

RAILWAY SERVANTS WORKING UNDER THE RAILWAYS ACT IN 1935-1936¹

Railways	Total number of workers
North Western	105,217
East Indian	125,156
Eastern Bengal	49,579
Great Indian Peninsula	83,541
Madras and Southern Mahratta	49,699
Bombay, Baroda and Central India	64,609
Total	477,801

¹ 31 March 1936. Cf. *Annual Report on the Working of the Hours of Employment Regulations*, Government of India, Railway Department, 1936-1937, pp. 3 and 4.

The report of the Royal Commission on Labour gives the following information about actual hours of work of railway servants at the time of its enquiries (1929-1930) : In railway workshops the normal hours of work might be said to be 48 in a

week of $5\frac{1}{2}$ days. In the larger locomotive sheds a three-shift system of 8 hours each was worked, and in the smaller sheds, where work was intermittent, two shifts of 12 hours a day or 84 hours a week. Mechanical staff employed in the sheds was said to work generally 8 hours a day. Hours worked by the engineering department on maintenance of the permanent way were found to vary on different railways; generally they were said to be from 8 to 9 a day and from 48 to 58 a week; on one railway the hours were found to be 12 a day but with two hours off. At the larger stations a three-shift system of 8 hours each was worked by the station staff, with the exception of a few classes of intermittent workers whose shifts were 12 hours. At smaller stations, where the work was usually intermittent, hours were generally 9 to 12; although generally less than 60 a week, the hours of effective work on some railways were found to exceed that figure. As regards running staff, it was reported that a large percentage was working within the 60-hour limit, but on some lines it was common for drivers, firemen and guards to work up to 77 and 80 hours a week or even longer.¹

The Railways Act of 1930 provides that railway servants may not be employed for more than 60 hours a week on an average in any month, except in the case of intermittent workers who may not work more than 84 hours a week. The possible scope of application of these provisions may be gauged from the following table which gives the approximate percentages of non-intermittent and intermittent workers:

NON-INTERMITTENT AND INTERMITTENT WORKERS COVERED BY
THE RAILWAYS ACT IN 1936-1937¹

Railways	Non-intermittent: per cent.	Essentially intermittent: per cent.	Excluded from the regulations: per cent.	Total
North Western.	71	16.1	12.9	100
East Indian.	71	15.4	13.6	100
Eastern Bengal.	67	18.2	14.8	100
Great Indian Peninsula.	61	23.4	12.6	100
Madras and Southern Mahratta.	55	31.4	13.6	100
Bombay, Baroda and Central India	58	27.6	14.4	100

¹ Compiled from *Annual Report on the Working of the Hours of Employment Regulations*, Railway Department, 1936-1937, p. 15.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 156-157.

At present the Act has not been fully applied in the case of railway servants whose work is essentially intermittent, but their hours of work may not exceed 84 per week. Moreover, a subsidiary instruction (No. 12) directs that "every effort should be made to limit under normal conditions their daily hours of duty to 12".¹

As to the enforcement of the law, comparatively few railway servants seem to work in excess of the 60-hour or 84-hour weekly limitations, although there are certain categories of the staff who still work beyond their rostered hours to a greater or less extent. Most of the breaches of the regulations are to be found among the transport staff and goods-shed clerks. Some of the assistant station masters are on duty when they should be away and some of them perform certain duties for the postal department outside the rostered hours. Some loading and unloading work is also done by the staff at stations outside the rostered hours. Most of the staff, however, are reported to be now becoming familiar with the organisation of the work under their new rosters.²

The Royal Commission on Labour recommended that the Railway Board should consider the practicability of reducing hours for intermittent workers, and also that, as soon as experience of the altered working hours is available, the case of all individual branches be examined in turn with a view to determining to what extent the prevailing hours require reduction, and that thereafter action be taken to secure, on all railways, the reduction necessary. These recommendations have been accepted and are being gradually put into effect.

DOCKS

When the Royal Commission on Labour reported, the hours of work of dock labourers varied from port to port, and there were no restrictions either on normal working hours or on overtime. Hours of work were longest in Karachi and Rangoon; in the former port, the day shift extended to 12 hours in summer and to 11 hours in winter, with one hour's interval, whilst the men on the night shift worked for 11½ hours without a break. In Rangoon both day and night shifts worked 11 hours, without

¹ *Annual Report on the Working of the Hours of Employment Regulations, 1936-1937*, p. 12.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 6 and 7.

any interval except between the two shifts. In Madras the hours were also 11, but with an hour's interval at midday. In Bombay the day shift worked 9 hours and the night shift 8 hours. In Calcutta hours of work fell between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. with two intervals of half an hour each.

The Royal Commission on Labour recommended that the normal daily hours prescribed by law should be fixed at 9, with overtime permissible up to three hours.¹ This recommendation has been accepted, and hours in all the major ports, except Madras, have been reduced to 9 a day; legislation has not, however, been thought necessary, and the Government of Madras has also been asked to secure the reduction of hours to 9 without legislation.²

TRAMWAY AND MOTOR-BUS SERVICES

On tramways the Royal Commission found that hours of work were generally fixed on the basis of an 8-hour day, but the actual hours worked by the traffic staff were longer, i.e. 9 or 10 in one case, owing to delays on the road and to the extra trips which had to be worked on account of absenteeism. The Royal Commission recommended that tramway companies should endeavour to restrict the working hours to 54 a week.³

While recognising the great difficulty of controlling hours on motor-bus services, the Royal Commission on Labour recommended that in granting licences for motor-buses, the authorities should consider whether, in particular cases, a limitation of hours was required and, if so, how it should be enforced. While most of the provinces have found it neither necessary nor feasible to implement the recommendation, Assam, the United Provinces and Bombay have accepted it, and it is under consideration in Madras.⁴

5. — Spreadover

Of considerable importance in connection with the limitation of working hours is the question of spreadover, or the period

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 187-188.

² *Fourth Report showing the Action taken by the Central and Provincial Governments on the Recommendation made by the Royal Commission on Labour in India, 1935*, p. 10.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 189-190.

⁴ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Fourth Report, 1935*, p. 118.

within which daily maximum hours prescribed may be worked. It is evident that any undue extension of this period may seriously interfere with the night rest and recreation of all classes of workers, and especially with family life and the domestic duties of women workers. Normally, the length of spreadover is equal to the maximum hours of work plus the prescribed break or breaks of an hour or half an hour, but in some cases in India the maximum hours have been divided into two or more spells separated by long intervals.

In most industries the question of spreadover does not arise. It does not, for instance, arise on plantations, where, except for the midday rest which is usually longer than in other industries, work is continuous until the tasks are completed. On the other hand, the problem has been serious in the case of mines, especially in underground work, and the limitation of underground hours to 9 a day by the Mines Act of 1935 was destined, among other things, to remove the evil of long spreadover. The problem of spreadover is most complicated in factories, since, with the installation of electricity, the work can be prolonged until late at night.

Under the earlier Factories Act, the possible period of spreadover consisted of $13\frac{1}{2}$ hours between 5.30 a.m. and 7 p.m. for women and children. No statutory limitation of spreadover existed in the case of men workers, and in one extreme instance the Royal Commission on Labour found that in two Indian cotton mills in the South, working in shifts, one shift had to work two periods of 5 hours each, separated by intervals of 7 hours. In the Bengal Jute Mills, under the multiple-shift system, there were often considerable intervals within the shifts, although the spreadover was limited to the period between 5.30 a.m. and 7 p.m. ¹ Under the single-shift system introduced in 1931 work was spread over the period from 5.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. for both adult workers and children. ²

The Factories Act of 1934, which is based on the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Labour, ³ fixes the period of spreadover at $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours for children and 13 hours for both men and women. Moreover, women and children may not be

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 47.

² INDIAN JUTE MILLS ASSOCIATION : *Report on a Survey of Women Workers in Jute Mills, 1931-1932*, p. 3.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 47-48.

employed before 6 a.m. and after 7 p.m. ; but under clause (1) of section 45, Local Governments may, by notification in the local official Gazette, vary these hours so as to make the working day fall within any span of 13 hours between 5 a.m. and 7.30 p.m. The object of this provision is to give a certain elasticity to the rule while guaranteeing to the women a night rest of not less than 11 hours in accordance with the law and the Night Work (Women) Convention, 1919. In virtue of clause (1) of section 45, the Jute Mills Association applied to the Government of Bengal for permission for their mills to employ women between the hours of 5.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. The application was, however, refused, and as the jute mills cannot very well commence work without women workers being present, they employ both men and women between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m., thus giving a spreadover of 13 hours as granted by the Act.¹

Regarding railways, neither the Railways Act nor the rules made thereunder provide for any limit to the spreadover of daily work. But Subsidiary Instruction No. 13, though it has not legal force, lays down that employees to whom the Regulations apply " should, as far as possible, be given in every period of 24 hours a maximum rest period of not less than 8 consecutive hours ". Essentially intermittent workers are rarely on duty for more than 12 hours except when those who work on continuous processes change shifts ; this change of shifts does not usually take place more than once a week or fortnight or at even longer periods.²

It may also be noted that Subsidiary Instruction No. 8 lays down that " in preparing duty rosters, care should be taken to avoid as far as possible rosters which require employees to perform continual night duty ".³ Under this Instruction night watchmen at large stations and in large yards are rostered to take their turn on the night shift. Some provisions have also been made in rosters so that assistant station masters at small stations may attend their duty either in the first half of the night or in the second.

¹ INDIAN JUTE MILLS ASSOCIATION : *Report of the Committee, 1934*, Calcutta, 1935, pp. 39-41.

² RAILWAY DEPARTMENT : *Annual Report on the Working of the Hours of Employment Regulations, 1933-1934*, p. 18; 1936-1937, p. 12.

³ *Ibid.*, 1936-1937, p. 12.

6. — Intervals and Days of Rest

The question of breaks or rest intervals is not dealt with by plantation legislation, but it is the practice to interrupt work at midday for meals ; moreover, given the pace and method of organisation of work, it is possible for the workers to rest at other times. Neither does the law require regular rest intervals in mines ; if regular rest intervals are prescribed by the management they must be shown in the register kept by each mine.

In factories, where the speed of work is relatively high, the question of intervals of rest is much more important. As regards children, the Factories Act of 1911 provided that, if they worked 5 hours a day, no break was needed, but if more than $5\frac{1}{2}$ hours a day were worked, half an hour's rest must be given after not more than 4 hours' work. The Act of 1934 does not prescribe an interval of rest for children, as they are now permitted to work only 5 hours a day. For women the Act of 1891 provided for a rest period of $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours for every 11 hours worked, or proportionately less for a smaller number of hours worked. However, this compulsory rest period was often found inconvenient ; it was not long enough to allow women to go home and return, and it was too long for the purposes of necessary rest in the factory. By the Act of 1911, this rest period was therefore reduced to half an hour, i.e. the same as that for men. Since then the prescribed intervals of rest are the same for men and women alike.

Intervals of rest for adult men were first made compulsory in 1891, when the law provided that work should be stopped for a full half-hour between 12 noon and 2 p.m. in all factories, except in those in which an approved shift system was in force. The Factories Act of 1911 made this stoppage compulsory at the end of every 6 hours, and the amending Act of 1922 raised the duration of the rest interval to an hour, which, at the request of the workers concerned, might be divided into two periods of half an hour each, provided that no man should work more than 5 hours continuously without a period of rest of at least half an hour. The amending Act of 1926 made it possible, at the request of the workers concerned and with the previous sanction of the Local Government, to limit the period of rest to one half-hour for persons employed for not more than $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Under the older Factories Act, if the factory closed before the second interval was due, it infringed the law. The amending

Act of 1926 removed this provision, so that after $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours' work, with an interval of rest of half an hour, the workers could leave the factory. Under the provisions of section 37 of the Act of 1934, no adult worker may work (1) more than 6 hours without having an interval of rest of an hour, or (2) more than 5 hours without having an interval of rest of half an hour, or (3) more than $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours without having an interval of rest of two half-hours. Some idea of the practice regarding rest intervals is given in the statistics for 1936. In that year, 5,581 perennial and 3,742 seasonal factories, 4,352 and 3,051 respectively granted intervals of rest for one full hour at midday.¹

As regards the weekly rest, it may be stated that almost all Indian workers whose conditions of work are regulated by law enjoy a weekly day of rest.

Plantation work was always restricted to 6 days a week for all classes of workers. Work in mines was restricted to 6 days a week by the Act of 1923. The Railways Act also provides for a weekly holiday of not less than 24 consecutive hours, although exceptions are made in the case of men whose work is essentially intermittent and in some other cases. Moreover, considerable difficulties have been met with in giving effect to this provision with reference to certain classes of railway servants, e.g. station masters and commercial staff, but these are being gradually overcome.

Factory legislation has provided for weekly holidays for children since 1881. The Factories Act of 1891 provided that no woman should work more than 6 days continuously without a day of rest. The Factories Act of 1911 granted a weekly holiday for all workers, and the 1922 Act added the proviso that no person should be employed for more than 10 consecutive days without a holiday for one whole day. The Act of 1934, in section 35, has made almost the same provisions regarding weekly holidays. Generally, the day of rest is Sunday, as provided under the Act, although employers may substitute for a Sunday any one of the three days preceding or following it, subject to the condition that no one may work more than 10 days consecutively. The object of this provision is to enable important religious festivals to be substituted for Sundays, a possibility which is

¹ Cf. *Statistics of Factories Subject to the Indian Factories Act, 1936*, Statement V-A and V-B.

generally appreciated by employers and workers alike. In 1936, of 5,581 perennial and 3,742 seasonal factories, 1,837 and 740 respectively granted holidays on Sundays, while 2,836 and 2,439 respectively closed either on Sunday or another day of the week. In other words, over four-fifths of all factories granted a regular weekly holiday,¹ while the remainder made other arrangements for the weekly rest.

7. — Exemptions

The exemptions or exceptions provided for in Indian labour legislation are in general of the same character as those found in other legislations and permitted by the Conventions of the International Labour Organisation. The question has, however, some special aspects in the case of railways and, more especially, in the case of factories.

As regards railways, the need for elasticity during the period of adaptation to the régime of restricted working hours and weekly holidays led to the provision in the Railways Act of power to grant exemptions more particularly in the case of workers where work is essentially intermittent. Sections 71C and 71D of the Railways Act also permit temporary exceptions to be made to the normal restrictions under certain specific circumstances ; Rule 5 gives authority to the railway managements to make such temporary exceptions.²

As regards factories, the question of exemptions has in the past been complicated by the lack of distinction in the legislation between perennial and seasonal factories and the practice of leaving a wide latitude to the Local Governments which administer the Factories Act.

The adoption of the principle of dealing in the same legislative provisions with perennial and seasonal factories made it necessary to include provisions for many exceptions which were justifiable in the case of the latter but not in the case of the former class of factories. A distinction has, however, been drawn by the Factories Act of 1934, and has made possible the withdrawal of a number of possibilities of exemption for perennial factories.

¹ *Statistics of Factories Subject to the Indian Factories Act, 1936*, Statement V-A and V-B.

² Cf. *Annual Report on the Working of the Hours of Employment Regulations for 1933-1934*, p. 16.

The Royal Commission on Labour found that there were differences in the various provinces in the administration of the provisions of the Factories Act relating to exemptions ; and considering that it was desirable that there should be more uniform standards for the grant of exemptions throughout the country, the Commission proposed that certain general principles should be inserted in the law. These recommendations have been followed in the Factories Act of 1934. Section 43, for instance, provides for the making of rules governing exemptions permitted by the Act, whereas such exemptions were formerly made by notification in the *Official Gazette*. Moreover, the rules relating to exemptions may not be in force for longer than three years, a provision to which the Royal Commission attached importance, as it permits of a periodical review of the conditions under which the exemptions are granted.

8. — Overtime

Overtime in the plantation industry is represented by the additional task or *ticca* which the workers may undertake when the *hazira* or regular task is completed, and which is remunerated at a higher rate than the *hazira*. In reality, since the reduction of the *hazira*, which can now be finished in the course of the morning, the *ticca* can hardly be regarded as overtime and the additional rate of pay is more strictly a form of bonus. Moreover, as noted above, the system is being replaced by that of " unit tasks " or of several *haziras*.¹

The Indian Mines Act contains no provision relating to overtime, and none is allowed.

As regards factories, the Act of 1934 provides that any worker in a perennial factory who works more than 60 hours a week or more than 10 hours a day is entitled to overtime pay at the rate of one-and-a-half times the ordinary rate ; extra hours between the normal maxima of 54 or 56 and 60 must be paid for at one-and-a-quarter times the regular rate. In seasonal factories overtime only begins after the completion of the 60-hour week and entitles the worker to pay at one-and-a-half times the regular rate.

In practice, overtime would appear to be infrequent in perennial factories, with the exception of engineering shops in

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 383 and 393.

which, however, the additional hours rarely exceed the legal maximum.

For railways the Railways Act of 1930 provides that hours worked in cases of exceptional pressure of work other than work due to accidents or unforeseen emergencies are to be paid at one-and-a-quarter times the ordinary rate of pay. Under Article 7 of the Subsidiary Instruction, the overtime rate is payable only when the maximum limits, i.e. a monthly average of 60 hours a week in the case of continuous work and 84 hours a week in the case of essentially intermittent work, are exceeded.¹

The administration of these provisions has raised some difficulties, but they are being gradually overcome. In practice, almost the only occasions on which extra roster hours are worked at present are in cases of sickness of other railway servants, when their duties have to be taken over by fellow-workmen until substitutes are provided.²

As regards overtime worked in circumstances which do not entitle the workers to overtime pay under the Railways Act, the Royal Commission states that gangmen employed during accidents or emergencies are given either compensatory rest or allowances; the latter being generally at the rate of half a day's pay if the overtime worked is 4 hours or less, and a whole day's pay if more; overtime worked by intermittent workers is paid for to a considerable extent in the shape of increased mileage allowance to guards, and of overtime and other allowances to drivers and firemen.³

A considerable amount of overtime is worked in loading and unloading ships. The Royal Commission was informed that in the port of Bombay, if a ship was being loaded or unloaded continuously day and night, a gang was ordinarily required to work three consecutive shifts, i.e. 24 hours, excluding breaks. Payment was made at the same rate for all three shifts. The Royal Commission on Labour recommended that overtime should be allowed up to a maximum of 3 additional hours of work on any one day over 9 hours of regular work, and that the payment for each hour of overtime work should be not less than 33½ per

¹ RAILWAY DEPARTMENT: *Annual Report on the Working of the Hours of Employment Regulations, 1932-1933*, p. 16.

² *Ibid.*, 1933-1934, pp. 16-17.

³ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 156-157.

cent. over the ordinary rates. ¹ This recommendation has been postponed indefinitely for consideration ; in the opinion of the Government of India, a scheme of decasualisation and registration should precede any attempt to regulate overtime. ²

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 188.

² GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Fourth Report*, 1935, p. 11.

CHAPTER VIII

WAGES

Any study of wages in India is greatly handicapped by the non-existence of comparable statistics of wages and cost of living.¹ The Royal Commission on Labour recommended that legislation should be adopted, preferably by the Central Legislature, enabling the authorities to collect information regarding wages, among other things. This suggestion is reported to be under consideration by the Government of India in connection with proposals for a Statistics Bill of a more comprehensive character.²

On the basis of the available information, the present chapter deals with the basis of wage payment, the systems of payment, deductions from wages, earnings and variations in earnings and bonuses and concessions.

1. — Basis of Wage-fixing

Wages on plantations are generally fixed by the piece or task, but workers are also paid time rates for work on certain operations. As already explained in connection with hours of work, labourers on the Assam tea gardens either perform a standard

¹ Some statistics on wages are published in respect of certain industries. There have also been a few special investigations, such as the enquiries undertaken by the Bombay Labour Office into wages and family budgets in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Sholapur, etc., and also by the Burma Labour Statistical Bureau into the standard and cost of living of the working classes in Rangoon. Moreover, in 1930, several enquiries were undertaken by Local Governments in order to supply information to the Royal Commission on Labour. The statistical information contained in this and the following chapters is largely based on the results of these enquiries.

² GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Fourth Report*, 1935, p. 29.

task called the *hazira* with an additional optional task known as the *ticca*, or work a number of "unit-tasks".

The system in the Bengal Dooars is in many respects the same as in Assam. Formerly the basic task was the *hazira*, to which could be added an overtime task or *doubli*. When the cost of living rose, the planters preferred to reduce the *hazira* task rather than increase wages; at the same time a second and even a third *hazira* was introduced. The time taken to complete the tasks was stated to be about $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours for the first *hazira* and $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours for the subsequent *haziras*. The piece-work system also exists in the Darjeeling district and the Terai and other parts in the North, as well as in Madras and Coorg in the South.¹ For some of the work on plantations payment is made on a time basis, especially in the slack season.

Piece work is found in a large number of factories, and especially in the spinning and weaving departments of cotton mills. In 1926, for instance, the number of workers, including men, women and children, paid by the piece amounted to about 48 per cent. in Bombay, over 45 per cent. in Ahmedabad and over 51 per cent. in Sholapur. Some workers were employed on a combined time and piece basis, but the proportion of such workers was very small.²

The basis of wage payment in mines varies with the type of mine and the locality. In coal mines, except those in Assam, practically all work underground is paid by the piece, the unit for coal cutters and loaders being the tub. Sometimes, instead of being paid by the tub, the price of coal is fixed by the heap or by 100 cubic feet, but this system of price-fixing by footage or the distance cut has not made much headway in India. Most of the workers on the surface are employed on daily time rates.

So far as railways are concerned, except for a few cases of piece work in some workshops, the workers are either daily-rated or monthly-rated, the daily-rated workers including practically all workers in the locomotive, carriage and wagon shops, with the exception of those employed in some shops on two railways.

¹ Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, pp. 383-384, 398, 399-400.

² Refers to the year 1926, which is the latest year in which an enquiry into the matter was made. Cf. Report on an Enquiry into the Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry in 1926 (Government of Bombay, Central Press, 1930), pp. 33-34.

In most other industries time rates are paid, but in building and constructional work, as well as in loading and unloading ships, work is also often paid on a contract basis.

2. — Systems of Wage Payment

The question of methods of wage payment is of particular importance in India, where such practices as indirect payment, including forms of the truck system, payment at long intervals, delay in wage payment, attachment and besetting, and deductions from wages were still found up to the end of the period covered by this report. The position in regard to some of these practices has been substantially changed by the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, which came into force in March 1937 (see Chapter III).

INDIRECT PAYMENT

In almost all industries wages are paid in cash and directly to the workers who earn them, and the Payment of Wages Act fixes responsibility for payment on the employer or his responsible agent. Indirect payment is not common, although instances of its existence have been found.¹ The most important forms of indirect payment were practices more or less connected with the truck system. Some mineowners in Madras, for instance, have been reported to keep accounts with shopkeepers, and, in lieu of payment of wages, to issue orders on the shops to supply provisions to the labourers.² Modified forms of the truck system have also been found to exist in other industries. Thus, factories have been known to establish grain depots, where grain could be bought at a price 10 per cent. below the market price; wages in these factories were paid partly in cash and partly by ticket.

A much more common practice among employers throughout the country is to buy grain and other commodities and sell them to workers at cost price or at a price below the market price, either throughout the year or in times of scarcity. Some

¹ In a number of tea gardens in the Dooars of Bengal, the Royal Commission found that wages were paid in a lump sum to the *sardar* or foreman, who, in turn, paid the individual labourers. The Royal Commission recommended the immediate abolition of this system. — *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 399.

² *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 34 : Periods of Wage Payment, 1925, p. 25.

employers deduct the cost of goods bought by workers from wages, while others leave the workers to pay cash for their purchases. These practices are much in favour with the workers, who find it far more economical to buy from the employer than to make their purchases in the ordinary market. As examples of these practices may be mentioned the tea gardens of Madras and Assam, where rice and other provisions are supplied to the workers, the cost being deducted from wages; in coal mines in Assam, manganese mines in the Central Provinces, brick works in Malabar, engineering works in Madras and the Central Provinces, rice mills in Burma and tanneries in Madras, grain and other provisions are sold at cost price or at a price lower than the market price; the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, the biggest concerns in the Madras Presidency, maintain stores for the supply of provisions, and about 40 per cent. of the mills under the control of the Bombay Mill Owners' Association conduct cheap grain stores where grain is sold at wholesale prices for cash as well as on credit. In the last case the price of commodities sold is recovered on pay day.¹

PERIODS OF PAYMENT

There is no uniformity in the periodicity of wage payment in India. Under the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, no wage-period may exceed one month, and the most common practice is payment by the month, but there are important exceptions in which wages are paid in respect of fortnightly and weekly periods. Unskilled and casual workers are usually paid daily, except when employed under the contracting system.

On plantations the period of wage payment varies widely. In the Assam Valley wages are paid monthly in respect of the *hazira* task, but the *ticca* task or overtime is paid daily in some gardens and weekly or fortnightly in others. In the Surma Valley about 90 per cent. of the workers are paid weekly, and the remaining 10 per cent. either daily or fortnightly. In Bengal wages may be paid monthly, weekly or fortnightly, while the prevailing system of payment is weekly in Madras and monthly in the Punjab.²

¹ *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 34: Periods of Wage Payment, 1925, pp. 10-30.

² *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 34: Periods of Wage Payment, 1925, p. 28.

The period of wage payment in factories varies both by locality and industry. In the jute mills of Bengal, with the exception of clerks, artisans and menials, who are paid by the month, all textile workers are paid by the week. In the cotton mills of Bombay, Cawnpore and Nagpur payment is generally made by the month. In the cotton mills of Ahmedabad the period of wage payment is "hapta", which varies from 14 to 16 days in different factories. In the cotton-ginning and pressing factories of some provinces, e.g. the Central Provinces, the wages of skilled workers are paid by the month and those of others by the week, while in others there is no fixed period, e.g. the Bombay Presidency. In engineering works payment is generally made by the month, but weekly payments also exist in Bihar and Orissa, and fortnightly payments in Assam, Bombay, Delhi and Madras.

There is also great variation in the practices of the mining industries. Daily payments were once common, but were found to have an unsteady effect on the labour force; the system of weekly payments was therefore adopted. Payment by the day, however, still exists to a great extent in the Raniganj coalfield, although in the Jharia coalfield weekly payments are the rule. Fortnightly payments are made in the coalfields of Bihar and Orissa and Madras, and in the salt mines of the Punjab. In other mines, payment is made by the week in the case of unskilled and casual labourers, and by the month in the case of other workers. ¹

Wages on railways, whether rated monthly or daily, are paid by the month.

DELAY IN PAYMENT

Before the coming into force of the Payment of Wages Act, delay in the payment of wages was widespread in India, and was a factor in increasing the indebtedness of workers. There was generally no waiting period for payment of wages in the coal mines of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, or in the jute mills of Bengal, but it had long been the practice of the majority of employers to hold up the payment of wages for varying periods after the period during which the wages are earned. The extent to which the practice existed before 1925 was revealed in the enquiry into periods of wage payment which has already been quoted. ²

¹ *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 34 : Periods of Wage Payment, 1925, pp. 24-25.

² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

As in the case of the periodicity of payment, the length of time which elapses between the end of the period during which wages are earned and the day of payment varies in different provinces, industries and establishments. Even in the same undertaking the waiting period may be different for different classes of workers. As a general rule, the length of the waiting period is closely related to the periodicity of wage payment. Thus, while daily wages are paid on the day on which they have been earned or on the following day, weekly wages are paid from 2 to 5 days later, fortnightly wages within from 5 to 7 days, and, before the 1936 Act, monthly wages from 10 to 15 days after the end of the month. Many instances are, however, known where the waiting period for monthly wages was extended even to a month. Under the new Act, wages must be paid before the expiry of the seventh day in undertakings employing less than 1,000 workers, and before the expiry of the tenth day in other cases.

Such long periods of waiting, especially in the case of monthly payments, cause a great deal of inconvenience to the workers. In many cases, therefore, relief is given in the form of a wage advance or an interim payment. Sometimes, the amount of the advance is made without taking into consideration the work performed, but it usually depends on the estimated value of the work already done. Advances may be made in cash or in the form of rations, which may be charged against the wages when paid.¹

The system of wage payment on plantations in the south, especially in the Madras Presidency and Coorg, is generally linked up with the system of advances made before work actually begins. On arrival at the estate, the labourer is debited with the amount of the advance made to him, and is credited from time to time with the wages he earns. For his maintenance, he is given weekly advances which are debited to his account. Weekly payments are from R.1 to Rs.1-4 for men and from 12 annas to R.1 for women. They are not always made in cash; in the Nilgiris and Anamalais, for instance, the estates issue rice at concession rates and make a cash payment of 4 annas a week to each adult worker. The accounts are made up monthly, and are open to inspection by the workers, but in practice there is scarcely any chance for an effective check on the part of the workers. The final settle-

¹ *Bulletin of Indian Industries and Labour*, No. 34 : Periods of Wage Payment, 1925, pp. 3, 10, 12, 18, 24-28.

ment of wages is made at the end of the contract period, which is generally from 1 June to 31 March. At the end of the season the worker has usually a credit balance from Rs.30 to 40 ; when the worker is expected to return to work in the same garden in the following season this amount may be supplemented by fresh advances and by the expenses of the journey.¹

In recent years certain industries, especially the railways, have taken measures for the acceleration of payment. In June 1929 complaints were received by the Railway Board of delays in payment on certain divisions of the East Indian Railway. An investigation was immediately made of the conditions in the Moradabad division, and arrangements were made for payment of salaries and allowances to be made within 7 and 14 days respectively of the close of the month for which they were due. Since then the Bengal and North Western Railway and the Eastern Bengal Railway have made similar experiments so that the workshop staff should receive their wages within from 8 to 10 days and all other staff within 7 days of the period during which the wages were earned.²

COLLECTION OF DEBTS

This section would be incomplete without a brief reference to the insecurity of wages owing to liability of attachment for debt. The Royal Commission found that the wages of male workers might be attached for the payment of debt and the employer used as a collector of the debt ; moreover, the worker was liable to intimidation by his creditor in or outside the factory gate for the payment of his debt. In all these cases the claims of the creditor might become a first charge upon the wages of the debtor.

The legislative measures proposed for removing the evils of this system were summarised in Chapter III, together with the provisions of the Acts passed in Bengal and the Central Provinces against besetting.

3. — Deductions from Wages

The system of making deductions from wages for various purposes has long existed in India, and in recent years the atten-

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 400-401.

² *Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways, 1929-1930*, Vol. I, p. 65 ; 1931-1932, Vol. I, p. 58.

tion of the public and of the Governments has been drawn to its evil effects. An enquiry made by the Bombay Labour Office into textile factories in the first ten months of 1926 and to other establishments in 1925 showed that, out of 1,231 concerns covered by the enquiry, 441 or over one-third had a system of inflicting fines and of making deductions from wages in respect of these fines. It was also found that the system existed to a greater or lesser extent in ordnance factories, ginning and pressing factories, public utility undertakings and various publicly-owned undertakings. ¹

Although the infliction of fines is governed by prescribed rules in publicly-owned undertakings, railway workshops, and the larger and better organised factories and public utility undertakings, this did not appear to be the case in the majority of private industrial establishments. The power of inflicting fines generally rested with the heads of departments, but there were many exceptions to this rule. Moreover, it was stated that the concerns usually made no attempt to communicate to the workers the reasons for which fines were imposed, beyond posting the rules. ²

The most common offences for which the fines have been found to be inflicted are late attendance, non-attendance, breaches of discipline, insubordination, disobedience, bad or negligent work, and careless or negligent loss of, or damage to, tools or machinery. In some cases special lists of offences connected with the nature of the work undertaken are drawn up. The principal offences vary according to the nature of the industry; about nine-tenths of the cases of fining in textile factories were ascribed to bad or negligent work, and about half such cases in non-textile factories to breaches of discipline. ³ The amount of fines in relation to the total wage bill may not be large; for instance, the total amount of fines was only 0.39 per cent. and 0.18 per cent. of the total wage bill in textile factories and non-textile factories respectively. ⁴ But, as was pointed out by the Royal Commission on Labour, the average loss per worker is little indication of the hardship involved by fines in individual cases. ⁵

¹ *Report of an Enquiry into Deductions from Wages or Payments in respect of Fines*, Bombay, 1928, pp. 86-87.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 88 and 89.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 87 and 90-91.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁵ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 217.

Some of the outstanding features of the fining system were found to be : (1) for late attendance, a fine was inflicted at a fixed amount or an amount graded according to the number of minutes late ; (2) non-attendance was punished in various ways, such as loss of two days' wages for each day's absence without leave, and dismissal with or without forfeiture of wages for continued absence without leave ; (3) for damaged or spoilt material, deductions were generally made at the price at which the article would have been sold, had it not been spoiled or damaged. ¹

Besides deductions from wages in respect of fines, there also exist practices of deduction from wages for certain services. The most important of these deductions are made for housing accommodation and supply of food grains or other consumable articles. In some special cases deductions are also made for the supply of drinking water, medicines and medical attendance, accident compensation, interest on advances, and use of reading-rooms and libraries. ²

The practice of fining workers and deducting the amount from their wages is less common in mines and is practically unknown on plantations. The railways, however, were reported by the Royal Commission on Labour to have a system of debits, which were charged against the accounts of members of the staff for such matters as : (a) the sending of unnecessary telegrams, (b) loss or damage to railway property in their charge, (c) compensation claims paid by the railway to the public, where loss or damage to goods occurs while in railway custody, (d) undercharges in fares and freights, and (e) short remittances and base coins.

In the case of loss or damage to railway property and to parcels and goods, debits were generally made only in the event of negligence on the part of the staff. Undercharges in respect of fares and freights accounted for many of the debits, and since it took some time for the undercharges to be detected and the workers concerned notified, deductions under this heading provided continuous ground for complaint. A feature of the system was that the members of the staff were left to obtain reimbursement of the undercharges by personal negotiations with the consignees. The Royal Commission considered that this system of

recovery of undercharges was undesirable. An idea of the extent of the debits on account of undercharges can be obtained from the fact that on one railway alone Rs.260,578 were collected on 40,648 debits during the year ended 31 October 1929.¹

As a result of the recommendations of the Royal Commission, an enquiry was made in 1930 into the system of debits on the East Indian Railway ; the report was discussed by representatives of the principal railways in 1931, and on their recommendations the following measures have been introduced : (1) with a view to eliminating the fines and debits for petty offences, a system of conduct marks, enforced on the Burma Railways, was introduced on the Delhi Division of the North Western Railway on 1 March 1933 ; and (2) with a view to reducing to a minimum the percentage of debits unnecessarily made and subsequently withdrawn, a system was introduced on the Eastern Bengal Railway, under which error sheets for amounts exceeding a certain sum are checked by a gazetted officer of the Accounts Department and, if necessary, discussed with a commercial officer, a debt being booked only after agreement as to its correctness. If successful, both these systems will be extended to the other railways.² The meeting of representatives of the railways in 1931 also decided to continue the system of debits for private telegrams and undercharges, but that no recovery on account of debits should be made from any member of the staff during any one month in excess of 20 per cent. of salary.³

As regards the method of disposal of moneys derived from deductions from wages on account of fines, the Bombay enquiry already cited found that publicly-owned factories utilised the moneys for such purposes as (1) donations to workmen on discharge and to the widows and families of deceased workers ; (2) allowances to sick or injured persons ; (3) welfare work ; and (4) payment of bonuses. In the case of privately-owned factories, however, the sums deducted from wages on account of fines were generally used to reduce the wages bill. Deductions in respect of damages were generally credited to the sales account, and those for the use of tools or other materials were used for replacement ; a proportion was found to be used for welfare

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 153.

² *Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways, 1931-1932*, pp. 58-59 ; 1932-1933, p. 61.

³ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Fourth Report*, 1935, p. 40.

work or payment of gratuities to retiring workers or to the survivors of deceased workmen.

A summary of the provisions of the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, relating to fines and other deductions from wages is given in Chapter III.

4. — Earnings and Variations in Earnings

It is the purpose of the present section to give, on the basis of such statistical and other information as is available, some idea of the earnings of the workers in the principal branches of organised industry in India, and of the variations in earnings in recent years.

PLANTATIONS

There is considerable variation in wages on plantations in different parts of the country. This is partly to be explained by local circumstances, such as regional variations in the cost of living and standard of living ; but it is also due to such factors as the extent and nature of the concessions granted to the workers. Although concessions are found on all plantations, they vary somewhat from region to region ; further reference will be made to this question in the next section.

Another factor which affects wages is the employment of plantation workers in gangs under the supervision of *sardars* who, in addition to fixed monthly wages, receive various rates of commission. This commission has been found to vary from half an anna to two annas in the rupee on the earnings of gangs in Assam ; in the Dooars the commission was one pice for each *hazira* worked by the gangs and was paid by the planter. ¹ In the south the labourers are employed in gangs under *maistries* ; these *maistries* are generally paid a small monthly wage, but their main source of income is a commission amounting to 10 per cent. of the workers' earnings in the Madras Presidency and in Coorg, though in the latter province the commission may be 15 per cent. in the case of workers who have not received an advance from the estate. ²

Local variations in wages are largely eliminated by " wage agreements " among the planters. The tea industry in Assam,

¹ Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, pp. 383 and 398.

² Ibid., p. 401.

for instance, is organised by the Indian Tea Association, which promotes wage agreements among its members with a view to securing uniformity in wages. These agreements are enforced through district or circle committees which fix the level of wages for each district. Although each planter ultimately fixes the wages of his own workers, he may not raise them much above the agreed level. The object of these agreements is to avoid the movement of workers from one garden to another for higher wages.¹ Wages are similarly controlled by the Dooars Planters' Association and the Indian Tea Planters' Association in the Dooars, by the Darjeeling Planters' Association in the Darjeeling district and by the United Planters' Association in the south of India.²

There are no official returns of wages on plantations except for Assam, but a general idea of the wage level is given by the figures submitted to the Royal Commission on Labour by different planters' associations. The following table sets out the information contained in the Royal Commission's report as regards plantation areas other than Assam :

PLANTATION WAGES IN 1929 (AREAS OTHER THAN ASSAM)¹

Centre	Period	Men	Women	Children
		Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
The Dooars ²	Month	14 4 1	10 5 8	2 14 5
Darjeeling and the Terai ³	Day	7 6	6 0	2 9
Madras Presidency ⁴	Day	7 0	5 0	3 0 or 4 0
Coorg ⁴	Day	6 0	4 0	2 0 or 3 0

¹ Compiled from the *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 399-400.

² Average earnings.

³ Minimum earnings.

⁴ Basic rates.

In smaller plantation areas, such as those in the Punjab, the United Provinces and the Chota Nagpur division, labour is recruited locally and the wages paid are governed by local conditions.³

Data on average monthly cash wages on Assam tea gardens

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 385-386.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 399-400.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

are supplied by the Government of Assam in its annual report on immigrant labour. The figures given are obtained by dividing the total wages paid by the average daily working strength for the months of March and September, representing respectively the slack and busy seasons of the year.

The average monthly wages for the last few years are given in the following table together with those for 1923-1924,¹ when the present system of wages returns was introduced. It will be seen that wages are generally higher in the Assam Valley than in the Surma Valley. As compared with those of men, the wages of women and children are less by about one-fourth and one-half respectively. As far as the movements of wages are concerned, there was a substantial increase in 1928-1929, but this was not maintained and the levels in recent years were lower than any previously recorded.

AVERAGE MONTHLY WAGES ON ASSAM TEA GARDENS IN SELECTED YEARS¹

Year	Assam Valley			Surma Valley		
	Men*	Women	Children	Men	Women	Children
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1923-1924	11 5 1	9 8 9	5 4 9	8 12 10	6 15 5	4 11 4
1928-1929	14 1 5	11 4 2	7 6 1	10 13 11	8 11 2	5 7 11
1930-1931	14 0 11	10 12 7	7 4 7	9 3 2	7 10 5	5 3 6
1931-1932	12 8 5	9 8 7	6 15 8	7 14 11	6 1 1	4 9 1
1932-1933	11 12 8	8 15 8	6 6 9	7 6 9	5 4 10	4 2 7
1933-1934	7 7 7	5 14 4	4 3 8	5 6 3	3 11 10	2 10 2
1934-1935	7 2 11	5 7 3	3 5 3	5 10 9	3 12 4	2 11 5
1935-1936	6 13 2	5 10 4	4 0 2	5 12 11	4 0 1	2 13 7

¹ Compiled from *Reports on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam and Annual Reports on the Working of the Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act* (XXII of 1932) for the respective years.

It should be noted that the decrease in average monthly wages was partly due to restricted production. Owing to the economic depression and in order to react against the low prices prevailing, work was limited to finer plucking and the opportunities for earning *ticca* or additional pay were thus reduced. There has been some deterioration in the standard of living and

¹ The figures for earlier years are not included because they were calculated on a different basis and included *ticca*, diet rations, subsistence allowances and bonuses. Cf. *Report on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam, 1921-1922*, Statement VII.

amenities of life of the labourers as a result of this decrease in earnings, but these effects have been slight as prices of foodstuffs and other necessary articles have also fallen. Moreover, the workers are still granted most of the same concessions as before. ¹

COTTON MILLS

The most complete information on wages and earnings of cotton-mill workers is available for the Bombay Presidency, where reliable statistics have been collected by the Bombay Labour Office. ² Taking as a basis the year 1926, when an extensive enquiry was made, the average daily earnings can be compared with those of the year 1933 for Bombay, Ahmedabad and Sholapur, the three most important centres of the cotton-mill industry in the Presidency.

The following table shows that average daily earnings in Bombay City had fallen in most operations, the total decrease amounting to 16.94 per cent. in December 1933, as compared with July 1926 :

VARIATION IN AVERAGE DAILY EARNINGS IN BOMBAY CITY COTTON MILLS ¹

Occupations	Average daily earnings in July 1926	Average daily earnings in December 1933	Percentage increase + or decrease —
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	
Drawing tenters (men, piece)	1 4 8	1 2 8	— 9.68
Slubbing tenters „ „	1 6 3	1 3 10	— 10.86
Inter-tenters „ „	1 4 6	1 3 2	— 6.50
Roving tenters „ „	1 3 8	1 2 4	— 6.78
Ring siders (men, time)	1 0 3	0 14 10	— 8.25
Ring siders (women, „)	0 15 2	0 13 2	— 12.22
Tarawallas (men, „)	0 15 5	0 14 3	— 10.34
Tarawallas (women, „)	0 12 1	0 10 10	— 15.34
Doffers (men and women, „)	1 13 4	1 8 10	— 7.84
Weavers, 2 looms (men, piece)	0 11 9	0 11 9	— 7.84
Grey winders (women, „)	0 14 11	0 11 0	+ 0.76
Colour winders „ „	0 10 11		
Reelers „ „			
All workers . .	1 4 8	1 1 2	— 16.94

¹ *Wages and Unemployment in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry*, Bombay Labour Office, Government of Bombay, 1934, p. 31.

² *Report on Immigrant Labour in the Province of Assam*, 1933, p. 2.

² The more important investigations made by the Bombay Labour Office were the following : (1) May 1914 and May 1921 ; (2) August 1923 ; (3) May 1926 in the case of Ahmedabad, and July 1926 in the case of Bombay and Sholapur : (4) December 1933, April 1934 and May 1934.

In Ahmedabad, unlike Bombay City, there was an increase in daily earnings in different occupations, the total increase being 5.6 per cent. in December 1933, as compared with May 1926, as shown in the table below :

VARIATION IN AVERAGE DAILY EARNINGS IN AHMEDABAD COTTON MILLS ¹

Occupations	Average daily earnings in May 1926	Average daily earnings in December 1933	Percentage increase + or decrease —
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	
Drawing tenters (men, piece) .	1 1 3	1 3 11	+ 15.5
„ „ (women, „) .	0 15 8	1 2 4	+ 17.0
All slubbing tenters (men, piece)	1 4 3	1 5 11	+ 8.2
„ „ (women, „)	1 4 1	1 5 1	+ 5.0
Inter-tenters :			
Single side (men, piece) . .	1 0 11	1 1 5	+ 3.0
Double side („ „) . .	1 2 0	1 5 11	+ 21.8
Double side (women, piece) .	0 15 10	1 1 6	+ 10.5
Roving tenters :			
Two sides (men, time and piece) .	1 0 4	1 3 1	+ 16.8
„ „ (women, „ „ „)	0 15 10	1 3 10	+ 25.3
Siders :			
Single side (men and women)	0 15 2	1 0 10	+ 11.0
Two sides, „ „ „	1 6 10	1 8 0	+ 5.1
Doffers, ring and frame . . .			
(men and women, time) . . .	0 10 6	0 11 7	+ 10.3
Grey winders (men, piece) . .	0 14 10	0 12 1	— 18.5
„ „ (women, „) . . .	0 11 9	0 10 11	— 7.1
Colour winders (men, piece) . .	1 2 3	0 13 11	— 23.7
„ „ (women, „ „) . . .	0 14 6	0 12 11	— 10.9
Reelers (men, piece)	0 15 6	0 14 11	— 0.6
„ (women, „)	0 14 5	0 12 2	— 15.6
Weavers, 2 looms	1 13 5	1 14 11	+ 5.1
„ 3 looms	2 6 6	1 11 9	— 27.9
„ 4 looms	3 6 4	2 0 9	— 39.7
Total	1 4 10	1 6 0	+ 5.6

¹ *Wages and Unemployment in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry*, Bombay Labour Office, Government of Bombay, 1934, p. 70.

As in the case of Bombay City, there was also a reduction in average daily earnings of cotton mill workers in Sholapur, the total decrease amounting to 8.2 per cent. in December 1933, as compared with July 1926. This decrease, however, was mostly due to the alteration made in the basis of payment of the grain allowance. It will be noted that in the case of some occupations there was a slight increase.

VARIATION IN AVERAGE DAILY EARNINGS IN SHOLAPUR COTTON MILLS ¹

Occupations	Average daily earnings in July 1926			Average daily earnings in December 1933			Percentage increase + or decrease —
	Rs.	a.	p.	Rs.	a.	p.	
Drawing tenters (men, piece).	0	12	4	0	12	11	+ 4.73
Slubbing tenters „ „ .	0	13	3	0	14	8	+ 10.69
Inter-tenters „ „ .	0	12	9	0	13	2	+ 3.27
Roving tenters „ „ .	0	11	4	0	12	3	+ 8.09
Siders (single side)	0	11	5	0	10	7	— 7.30
„ (men, time)	0	9	2	0	8	0	— 12.73
Tarawallas (men, time) . .	0	8	2	0	7	3	— 11.22
Doffers (ring and frame) . .	0	14	6	0	12	5	— 14.37
„ (all, time). . . .	1	9	9	1	8	0	— 6.80
Weavers, 1 loom (men, piece)	0	6	2	0	4	11	— 20.27
„ 2 looms „ „ .	0	6	6	0	6	4	— 2.56
Winders, grey (women, piece)	0	6	9	0	5	6	— 18.52
„ colour „ „ .							
Reelers (women, piece). . .							
Weighted average. . . .	0	13	1	0	12	0	— 8.28

¹ *Wages and Unemployment in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry*, p. 86.

The method of calculating wages in most of the cotton mills in the Bombay Presidency is to take the rate before the war or any year between 1913 and 1918 as the basic wage, and to add to it allowances granted from time to time for increases in the cost of living, minus deductions for disciplinary fines. In Bombay City, for instance, the first increase of 15 per cent. in wages was granted by the Bombay Mill Owners' Association on 1 January 1918. This was gradually raised, and the total increase by 1 November 1920 was 70 per cent. for men workers on a time basis and women workers on both time and piece bases, and 80 per cent. for men workers on a piece basis. From 1919 to 1923 a bonus based on the monthly wages earned by the workers was also paid by most of the mills. ¹ The process of wage cuts began in individual mills in Bombay City in May 1933, and, by April 1934, 42 mills had made cuts in the cost-of-living allowance. In some mills the allowance was reduced from 80 and 70 per cent. to 55 and 50 per cent. respectively. As a result of these cuts, average daily earnings were lower by 16.94 per cent. in December 1933 than in July 1926, as noted above, and by 21 per cent. in April 1934.

¹ ROYAL COMMISSION ON INDIAN LABOUR : *Memorandum from the Government of Bombay*, 1929, Supplementary Note.

Increasing rationalisation is tending in the opposite direction, and there has been an increase of earnings by 50 per cent. in a few mills ; in most mills, however, rationalisation has been accompanied by a reduction in the cost-of-living allowance. ¹

In Ahmedabad, from December 1917 to 1921, the Managing Committee of the Mill Owners' Association, or the arbitrators chosen from time to time, awarded increments to different departments. For instance, warpers obtained an increase of 25 per cent. in rates in 1917, weavers 35 per cent. in 1918, spinners 85 per cent. in 1919. In June 1923 wages in Ahmedabad mills were reduced by 15.6 per cent. on account of the depression in the industry. ² In 1930 wages were restored to the extent of 8 per cent. in the spinning department and 5 per cent. in the weaving department. Although the rates were reduced in a few occupations, the wages generally in Ahmedabad showed a rise of 5.6 per cent. in 1933, as noted above. ³ Subsequently the Mill Owners' Association decided on a 25 per cent. general cut in all wages ; the Labour Union strongly opposed the decision ; an agreement was, however, arrived at on 13 January 1935 and the wages of all cotton-mill workers were reduced up to a maximum of $6\frac{1}{4}$ percent. ⁴ The effect of rationalisation on wages is much less noticeable in Ahmedabad than in Bombay.

In Sholapur a different system of compensation for the high cost of living was adopted. Individual mills granted increases in cash wages during the years 1918 to 1920 ; these increases were consolidated with the rates prevailing in 1914 and, in addition, a cost-of-living allowance was paid in kind, i.e. in the form of the sale of grain at a fixed price. In November 1920 all mills in Sholapur raised the cost-of-living allowance to 35 per cent. for men piece workers and 30 per cent. for men time workers and women time and piece workers. In January 1934 there was a wage cut of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., but including variations in the cost-of-living allowance, the total reduction in workers' wages amounted to 17. per cent. in the ten more important occupations and 20.5 per cent. in others. ⁵

¹ *Wages and Unemployment in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry*, 1934, pp. 26, 28, 111, 112, 113.

² ROYAL COMMISSION ON INDIAN LABOUR : *Memorandum from the Government of Bombay*, 1929, Supplementary Note.

³ *Wages and Unemployment in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry*, 1934, p. 111.

⁴ *Labour Gazette*, January 1935, p. 323 ; February 1935, p. 428.

⁵ *Wages and Unemployment in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry*,

A very comprehensive census of wages in the Bombay Presidency has recently been undertaken by the Bombay Labour Office, and the enquiry into wages in the permanent engineering, printing and textile industries has been completed and the results have also been published.

The textile industry in the Bombay Presidency includes the cotton, silk, wool and hosiery trades ; the most important is the cotton manufacturing industry, employing 114,913 men and 13,345 women on time rates, and 96,446 men and 31,604 women on piece rates. The table below indicates that the general daily earnings are highest in Ahmedabad, and that the earnings of men workers are much higher on piece rates than on time rates, while those of women are slightly higher on time rates than on piece rates.

AVERAGE DAILY EARNINGS OF MEN AND WOMEN IN COTTON
MILLS, BOMBAY PRESIDENCY, MAY 1934¹

Areas	Men		Women	
	Time	Piece	Time	Piece
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Bombay City	1 0 0	1 7 11	0 10 4	0 10 10
Bombay Suburban, Thana, Kolaba and Ratnagiri	0 14 10	1 5 0	0 8 4	0 10 6
Ahmedabad City	1 1 11	1 14 7	0 12 9	0 11 11
Ahmedabad, Kaira and Panch Mahals	0 13 9	1 8 8	0 8 11	0 10 3
Broach and Surat	0 13 6	1 3 7	0 9 2	0 8 1
East and West Khandesh	0 11 3	1 0 5	0 6 10	0 7 3
Poona, Nasik and Ahmed- nagar	0 13 7	1 4 6	0 7 6	0 7 7
Sholapur City	0 10 6	1 2 2	0 6 7	0 5 11
Sholapur and Satara	0 8 1	0 10 9	0 4 5	0 4 4
Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar and Kanara	0 8 9	0 11 6	0 5 11	0 7 8
Presidency Proper	0 15 7	1 8 6	0 10 3	0 10 0

¹ *General Wage Census* (Labour Office, Government of Bombay, 1937), Part I, *Perennial Factories (Third Report)*, p. 132.

OTHER FACTORIES

The next most important industry is engineering, which employed 46,089 workers, including unskilled labourers, in the Presidency of Bombay in May 1934. The average earnings were Rs.1-11-4 per day, and Rs.39-3-10 per month, with a general average percentage attendance figure of 85.8.

GENERAL AVERAGE EARNINGS OF MEN IN THE ENGINEERING
INDUSTRY, BOMBAY PRESIDENCY, MAY 1934¹

Areas	Number of persons employed	Average percentage attendance	Average daily earnings	Average monthly earnings
			Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1. Bombay City.	30,134	84.7	1 13 1	41 0 11
2. Bombay Suburban, Thana, Kolaba and Ratnagiri	2,330	90.0	1 10 7	42 7 10
3. Ahmedabad City	980	89.0	1 7 5	35 5 6
4. Ahmedabad, Kaira and Panch Mahals	1,840	85.8	2 8 2	56 2 6
5. Broach and Surat	405	86.5	1 6 5	35 13 8
6. East and West Khandesh	1,270	88.0	1 3 7	30 14 7
7. Poona, Nasik and Ahmednagar	5,240	86.0	1 2 9	26 9 0
8. Sholapur City	287	91.4	1 1 0	27 5 8
9. Sholapur and Satara . .	434	91.3	1 0 3	24 8 6
10. Belgaum, Dharwar, Bijapur and Kanara	3,169	90.7	1 10 0	38 12 5
Presidency Proper	46,089	85.8	1 11 4	39 3 10

¹ General Wage Census (Labour Office, Government of Bombay, 1935). Part I, Perennial Factories (First Report), p. 94.

The next industry enquired into was that of printing, which employed 8,604 men in May 1934. The general average earnings were Rs.1-6-2 per day and Rs.34-5-6 per month, with the general percentage attendance figure of 91.9.

GENERAL AVERAGE EARNINGS OF MEN IN THE PRINTING
INDUSTRY, BOMBAY PRESIDENCY, MAY 1934¹

Area	Number of persons employed	Average percentage attendance	Average daily earnings	Average monthly earnings
			Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Bombay City	6,084	91.9	1 8 3	37 9 2
Bombay Suburban, Thana, Kolaba and Ratnagiri	283	92.6	1 0 6	25 12 8
Ahmedabad City	253	88.0	1 1 5	25 13 10
Broach and Surat	113	92.5	0 14 4	22 6 7
Poona, Nasik and Ahmednagar	1,871	92.0	1 1 4	27 0 1
Presidency Proper	8,604	91.9	1 6 2	34 5 6

¹ General Wage Census (Labour Office, Government of Bombay, 1936). Part I, Perennial Factories (Second Report), p. 50.

No statistical enquiries have yet been made into wages in jute mills. The information given below was submitted by the Indian Jute Mill Association to the Royal Commission on Labour in 1929. At that time the single- and multiple-shift systems were in operation, and the figures therefore relate, in the case of single shifts, to a week of 60 hours, and, in the case of multiple shifts, to weeks of four days (54 hours) and five days (60 hours) respectively :

AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS IN BENGAL JUTE MILLS, 1929¹

Department	Multiple shift		Single shift 5 1/2 days = 60 hours per week
	4-day week	5-day week	
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Sacking weaving	8 2 9	9 3 0	9 8 0
Hessian weaving	5 15 0	7 4 9	8 4 6
Sacking winding	4 9 6	5 1 3	5 12 0
Hessian winding	4 8 7	5 6 0	5 12 0
Sacking spinning	2 9 6	3 4 9	4 2 0
Hessian spinning	3 0 3	3 14 0	4 2 0
Batching	2 12 9	3 9 9	4 5 3

¹ Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, p. 199.

No official statistics are available for wages in other factory industries. Some figures were supplied to the Royal Commission, but they only serve to give a rough indication of wages in various occupations. The monthly wages in Bombay and Ahmedabad, for instance, varied from Rs.50 to Rs.70 in the case of masons, from Rs.60 to Rs.75 in the case of carpenters and blacksmiths and from Rs.65 to Rs.80 in the case of fitters and turners. The wage rates in the same occupations were generally lower in Madras, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and the United Provinces, where the average monthly earnings of masons were given as about Rs.30, of carpenters about Rs.35, and of blacksmiths, fitters and turners about Rs.40. Wages in the Central Provinces, Burma, the Punjab and Delhi stood between these two extremes and in the order named.¹

A large number of different industrial processes are carried on in seasonal factories, and wages vary considerably with the nature of the occupation ; wages vary also under the influence of local conditions, a factor of importance in seasonal industries which are found all over the country and often in out-of-the-way places. Some idea of the wage level in seasonal factories is afforded by information relating to cotton-ginning and pressing mills, which are the most important of these factories. As reported to the Royal Commission, the wages of ordinary workers in ginning and pressing mills were 8 annas per day for men and 6 annas per day for women in the Punjab, Rs.15 and Rs.10 a month for men and women respectively in the United Provinces, between 6 and 12 annas per day for men and between 4 and 8 annas per day for women in the Bombay Presidency, and 8 annas and 9 annas 6 pie for men and 5 annas 1 pie and 5 annas 10 pie for women in Madras. Skilled workers, such as fitters, engineers and engine-drivers, were stated to receive much higher wages.²

MINES

All mines in British India are required by the regulations framed under the Indian Mines Act to supply, for the month of December every year, the average daily wages of all classes of

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 199.

² *Ibid.*, p. 200.

workers. They are obtained by dividing the total amount paid in wages for work done in the month by the aggregate daily attendance. The returns are published by the Chief Inspector of Mines in his Annual Report.

The following table shows the average daily earnings in the most important branches of mining, i.e. coal, mica, iron, manganese, lead and salt. As previously noted, the largest number of workers in mines are employed in the coalfields, which are located mostly in Jharia and Raniganj; the average earnings in Raniganj are practically the same as in Jharia.

As in the case of other industries, there has recently been a

AVERAGE DAILY EARNINGS IN INDIAN MINES, DECEMBER 1936¹

Workers	Coalfields (Jharia)	Mica mines (Bihar)	Iron mines (Bihar)	Manganese (Central Provinces)	Lead (Burma)	Salt (Punjab)
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
<i>Underground:</i>						
Miners . . .	7 6	6 0	—	6 3	2 1 0	2 3 3*
Loaders . .	6 3	—	—	—	—	—
Skilled workers .	9 9	6 9	—	—	1 13 0	15 3
Unskilled workers .	6 9	4 6	—	5 0	1 9 6	7 3
Women . .	5 3	—	—	—	—	7 3
<i>Open workings</i>						
Miners . . .	8 0	5 0	5 0	5 3	—	—
Loaders . .	7 3	—	—	—	—	—
Skilled workers .	6 6	4 9	11 0	12 0	1 0 0	—
Unskilled workers .	5 0	4 0	5 0	3 6	1 0 3	—
Women . .	4 9	3 3	3 0	3 6	9 3	—
<i>Surface :</i>						
Skilled workers .	9 3	6 9	13 3	11 0	1 4 3	1 1 9
Unskilled workers .	5 9	4 3	4 9	4 3	12 9	8 3
Women . .	4 3	3 6	3 0	3 3	8 0	—

¹ Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India, 1936, p. 6. As the Royal Commission pointed out in its report (p. 202), the figures for average earnings in mines must be accepted with some reserve. There is no official check on these returns, and the basis of finding the average rates by the aggregate daily attendance is a complicated matter. Moreover, the payment in all coal mines for coal-cutters and other underground workers is by the tub, which is often filled up jointly by carters and loaders. In the Punjab the system of payment is by gang, which makes it difficult to ascertain individual earnings.

VARIATIONS IN EARNINGS OF UNDERGROUND WORKERS
IN THE JHARIA COALFIELDS ¹

(Average daily earnings in December)

Year	Miners	Loaders	Skilled workers	Unskilled workers	Women
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1927	— 14 3	— 10 9	— 11 9	— 9 9	— 8 9
1930	13 6	10 9	12 6	9 6	8 6
1931	11 6	11 6	12 0	8 6	7 6
1932	9 9	8 6	10 9	7 0	6 6
1933	8 6	7 3	10 6	7 3	5 9
1934	8 0	6 9	10 6	7 0	5 3
1935	7 9	6 3	10 3	6 9	5 0
1936	7 6	6 3	9 9	6 9	5 3

¹ Compiled from *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, for the respective years.

substantial decline in earnings in mines. The variations in earnings of underground workers in the Jharia coalfields are shown in the table above. It will be seen that, as compared with 1927, earnings in 1936 had decreased by about one-half in the case of miners and by about one-third in the case of loaders. More or less similar decreases have taken place in the case of skilled labourers, unskilled workers and women.

RAILWAYS

On the basis of information supplied to it, the Royal Commission on Labour made an analysis of the number and monthly cost of all subordinate staff, including permanent and temporary workers, employed on the principal railways in September 1929. The following table is based on the table given in the Commission's report. The figures given in the column "total cost" include wages, overtime and other allowances, but exclude travelling or similar allowances not in the nature of extra pay, bonus contributions to the provident funds and gratuities. It will be noted that the average monthly earnings were Rs.18 for about one-third of the railway servants included, Rs.40 for about one-fifth, and Rs.44 for a little over one-third, or an average of Rs.35 for all the subordinate staff.

EARNINGS OF SUBORDINATE RAILWAY SERVANTS IN SEPTEMBER 1929 ¹

Department	Numbers employed	Per cent. of total	Total cost (Rs.)	Per cent. of total	Average monthly cost per worker (Rs.)
I. Engineering, i.e. permanent way, etc.	244,310	33	4,431,940	17	18
II. Transportation ² and commercial . .	264,215	35	11,657,949	44.5	44
III. Mechanical workshops and electrical and signal department	144,730	20	5,935,954	22.5	41
IV. Stores, medical, accounts, etc	50,273	7	1,653,251	6	33
V. Office staff ³	38,209	5	2,662,271	10	70
Total	741,737	100	26,341,365	100	35

¹ Adapted from a table in the *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 146.

² Transportation includes train, locomotive-running and relative staff in yards and locomotive sheds, and commercial includes staff at stations and goods sheds.

³ At head and divisional or district offices only, excluding workshops.

The average earnings shown in the above table represent a considerable increase over pre-war earnings. Formerly, wages were fixed in accordance with the rates prevailing in other industries, but in recent years they have been revised to allow for changes in the cost of living and improved standards of comfort. War allowances were given on various railways from 1917 onwards and increased from time to time until they were merged in the general revision of the scale of pay carried out between the years 1920 and 1922. The following table shows the result in 1920 of the general revision of the 1914 rates of wages in the case of six railways (indicated by the letters A, B, C, D, E, F) operating in different parts of the country. The higher increases affected the lower-paid staff, being 70 per cent. and 73 per cent. in the case of those receiving Rs.10 and Rs.15 a month respectively in 1914.

According to the estimate of the Railway Board, the rise in the average wages of railway servants, excluding supervisory and clerical staff, amounted to 124 per cent. in 1928-1929 as compared with 1913-1914, after taking into account the rise of 26 per cent. in the number of workers employed. On the basis of its own analysis of the figures, the Royal Commission on Labour con-

WAGES ON INDIAN RAILWAYS IN 1914 AND 1920 ¹

Pre-war monthly rates of pay (1914)	Percentage increase in 1920 on railways with headquarters in :					
	Punjab	Bombay		Bengal	Madras	
	A	B	C	D	E	F
(Rs.)						
10	70	70	55	40	50	35
15	73	73	53	53	67	47
20	65	65	50	50	55	40
25	52	52	52	52	44	48
30	50	50	50	50	37	40
35	51	51	51	51	37	34
40	50	50	50	50	35	37

¹ Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, p. 148.

cluded that the rise in the cost of staff in 1928-1929 over 1913-1914 was 11% per cent.; this estimate, however, included superior as well as subordinate staff, and also bonus contributions to the provident fund and gratuities, which were not included in the figures for 1913-1914. ¹

In spite of increases in wage rates and earnings, however, the information of the Royal Commission showed that 54 per cent. of the workers employed on the twelve principal railways were in receipt of less than Rs.20 per month on 31 March 1930. ² The Commission therefore recommended that the improvement of wage standards of low-paid workers should continue to receive careful consideration from the Railway Board and the administrations concerned.

In this connection it should be mentioned that the possibility of a minimum wage for the lowest or unskilled class of labour, comprising gangmen, porters, watermen, sweepers, cleaners, gatemen, etc., was considered in 1929, and a provisional scheme was prepared in 1930. Under this scheme the total annual wages bill of the lower-paid workers was increased by Rs.450,000 on the E.B. Railway, Rs.500,000 on the G.I.P. Railway, Rs.400,000 on the M.S.M. Railway, Rs.1,320,000 on the E.I. Railway, and Rs. 118,000 on the A.B. Railway. Other increases granted by two

¹ Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, pp. 148-150.

² Ibid., p. 150.

railways with effect from 1 September 1930 added a sum of about Rs.800,000 to the wages bill.¹ Owing to the serious decline in railway earnings as a result of the economic depression and to the fall in prices of commodities, the Railway Board did not sanction further revision and increment of wages in 1931-1932, except in the case of the Electrical Department of the East Indian Railway.²

Since 1930-1931 the wages policy of the Railway Board has been one of economy. In pursuance of this policy the following measures were taken in 1931 : (1) review of special pay with a view to reduction or abolition ; (2) reduction of allowances granted to members of the staff when temporarily performing work of a superior grade ; (3) reduction by $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of all compensatory allowances to both superior and subordinate staff in centres like Calcutta, Bombay and Rangoon ; and (4) abolition of relieving allowances granted to staff posted for relieving duty at stations.³

In addition, emergency reductions of wages and salaries were made under the Railway and Posts and Telegraph (Emergency Deductions from Salaries) Rules, 1931. These reductions affected the pay and allowances in the nature of pay, of all railway servants ; the scales of reduction were half an anna per rupee for monthly wages of Rs.30 and below, 1 anna per rupee for monthly wages of above Rs.30 and up to Rs.83-5-4, and 10 per cent. for monthly salaries above the last figure.⁴ These emergency reductions were applied from January 1932 until 31 March 1933. In 1932-1933 it was decided that an emergency reduction in pay not exceeding 5 per cent. should apply during 1933-1934 in respect of all Government servants, including those of the Railway Department.⁵

DOCKS

As regards dock labourers, the Royal Commission on Labour reported that the daily wages in Bombay were said to vary from

¹ Compiled from *Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways, 1929-1930, Vol. I, p. 62 ; 1930-1931, Vol. I, pp. 60-61.*

² *Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways, 1931-1932, Vol. I, pp. 56-57.*

³ *Ibid.*, 1931-1932, Vol. I, p. 63.

⁴ Compiled from *Report by the Railway Board on Indian Railways, 1931-1932, Vol. I, pp. 63-64.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1932-1933, Vol. I, p. 65.

14 annas to Rs.1-8-0, while in Karachi a firm of stevedores reported that the daily rate was Rs.1-2-0 for men and 13 annas for women. Daily earnings were highest in Rangoon. As a result of a recent strike the daily rate had been raised from Rs.1-8-0 to Rs.1-12-0, but this increase was followed by a reduction in employment among Indian dock labourers, who till then were exclusively employed in loading and unloading ships in Rangoon. "Most of them now find it impossible to secure employment for more than half the number of days in the month." The average monthly earnings of a dock labourer were estimated to be about Rs.20 in Calcutta and, for men employed by the Port Trust, about Rs.32, including payment for overtime, in Bombay.¹ The Bombay estimate did not, however, apply to the majority of the men employed in the docks.

UNSKILLED LABOURERS

The earnings of unskilled labourers who were employed regularly on manual work in factories and other undertakings were reported by the Royal Commission to be rarely above Rs.15 a month in the majority of the provinces; most labourers earned less and sometimes not more than Rs.10. The average earnings in the Punjab and Delhi, however, were above Rs.15, and were nearer Rs.20 in the Bombay Presidency and Rs.25 in Burma. A large number of labourers are employed on daily rates either casually or for limited spells in various occupations. The wages paid to this class of workers are largely influenced by, although they are higher than, the prevailing rates of wages for agricultural workers in the neighbourhood, and those vary from province to province and even from district to district. The rates were said to be about 12 annas per day for men in Burma and Bombay Presidency but lower in Delhi and the Punjab. They were about 8 annas for men, 6 annas for women, and 4 annas for children, in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and some parts of the Central Provinces, but lower in Madras, the United Provinces and other parts of the Central Provinces.²

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 202-203.

² *Ibid.*, p. 203

5. — Wage Levels in Different Provinces

In the absence of statistics which would make possible a reasonably accurate comparison of wages in different provinces, the Royal Commission used certain figures relating to cases under the Workmen's Compensation Act. These statistics relate mostly to fatal and serious accidents during the years from 1925 to 1929, a period when wage levels were fairly steady; they show the number of persons in different wage classes to whom compensation was awarded in cases which came before the Commissioners. The Royal Commission emphasised the fact that the figures, for various reasons, could only be regarded as having an indicative value; they were borne out by other evidence as regards the position of the various provinces in the matter of wage levels; they were much less reliable as an indication of the actual wage levels in each province. It will be seen that wages were lowest in Madras, the Central Provinces and the United Provinces; the provinces to the east of this group, namely, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, had a higher level, and also those to the west, namely, the Punjab and Bombay; the level was highest in Burma, which was closely followed by Bombay.

WAGE LEVELS IN DIFFERENT PROVINCES, 1925-1929 ¹

Province	Percentage of cases earning monthly wages of :						Total number of cases (1925-1929)
	Less than Rs. 13	Not less than Rs. 13 but less than Rs. 17-8	Not less than Rs. 17-8 but less than Rs. 22-8	Not less than Rs. 22-8 but less than Rs. 27-8	Not less than Rs. 27-8 but less than Rs. 32-8	Not less than Rs. 32-8	
United Provinces	26	27	15	9	7	16	304
Madras . .	22	25	19	15	4	15	110
Central Provinces	18	38	17	8	4	15	209
Bihar and Orissa. .	21	24	21	12	8	14	717
Bengal . .	13	18	18	15	10	26	873
Punjab . .	10	16	36	10	7	21	324
Bombay . .	3	10	19	23	13	32	1,273
Burma . .	1	3	10	16	27	43	186

¹ Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, p. 204.

6. — Standardisation

Mention has several times been made above of the disparities in wage levels, not only in different industries and localities but often also in the same industry and in the same locality, as shown for example by the Bombay Wage Census.

The question of adopting standard scales of wages for similar classes of work in the cotton-mill industry in Bombay was considered by the Bombay Industrial Dispute Committee in 1922 and again by the Textile Tariff Board in 1927. The latter recommended to the Bombay Mill Owners' Association the adoption of a system of standardised wages for the same classes of work as between mill and mill. In order to give effect to this recommendation, the Association evolved a standardisation scheme, which was subsequently examined in detail by the Bombay Strike Enquiry Committee of 1928-1929. The scheme was proposed to be introduced in 1929, but no further action has yet been taken in this direction.¹

Differences in wage rates are even more marked in the jute-mill industry, in spite of the fact that it is concentrated in a comparatively small area, and is subject to little variation in the classes of goods manufactured. Even mills under the same managing agents and located next to one another have different rates of wages for the same kind of work. The evidence of the Bengal Government before the Royal Commission on Labour stated that "perhaps in no industry in the world, situated in such a circumscribed area, is the wage position more inchoate."²

As regards railways, several lines have standardised wages for all grades of servants in each area with minimum and maximum pay for each class of employment. Owing to the different conditions existing in various parts of the country, any scheme of standardisation for the whole railway system has not been regarded as practicable, but the Royal Commission considered that action should, where possible, be taken to remove disparities in wages and service conditions at the termini of different railways and in workshops in the same locality.³

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 214-215.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 215-216.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

Standardisation has been carried to greatest lengths by the tea industry by means of the wage agreements already mentioned and which are designed to prevent one employer from paying substantially higher wages than his neighbour.¹

The Royal Commission on Labour made a number of recommendations for the extension of common standards of payment. In addition to the recommendation already mentioned in regard to railways, the Commission recommended that the railways should take steps to fix standard rates for similar classes and grades of labour, subject only to variation in districts where there were material differences in economic conditions. For Bombay cotton mills it recommended that every effort should be made to put into operation a policy of standardised wages. In the jute mills in Bengal it suggested that steps should be taken to investigate the possibility of standardisation of wages, both for time and piece workers, and that representatives of bona-fide trade unions should be associated with the investigation.²

7. — Absenteeism

Although the term "absenteeism" is used in India to cover absence from many causes, and the Royal Commission on Labour found, in the case of factories, that "there are few managers who can say precisely which workers are away because they are idling, which are kept away by sickness, and which have gone on holiday meaning to return",³ there is ample evidence that casual absence from work is a factor which has a considerable influence on the level of actual earnings in Indian industries.

In the Assam tea-garden industry, the average loss of wages owing to absenteeism is probably about 25 per cent. a month.⁴ Similar loss is sustained by workers in other industries. In August 1923, for instance, for which exact data are available, the loss of earnings through absenteeism in Bombay cotton mills amounted to about 10 per cent. in the case of men, about 17 per cent. in the case of women and over 13 per cent. in the case of young persons and children.⁵ The difference between the actual

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 385-386.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 151, 215-216.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴ *Assam Labour Enquiry Committee Report, 1921-1922*, pp. 32-33.

⁵ *Report on an Enquiry into Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry* (August 1923), Bombay, 1925, pp. 11 and 12.

monthly earnings of workers in various departments of Bombay cotton mills in December 1933 and the possible earnings on full-time working is shown in the following table :

AVERAGE MONTHLY EARNINGS OF COTTON-MILL WORKERS
IN BOMBAY CITY IN DECEMBER 1933 ¹

Occupation	Number of workers in the occupation	Average number of days worked	Average monthly earnings			Average monthly earnings of full-time workers		
			Rs.	a.	p.	Rs.	a.	p.
Drawing tenters (men, piece)	1,303	23.3	27	2	4	30	15	7
" " (men, time)	346	23.6	28	4	0	32	15	2
Slubbing tenters (men, piece)	631	23.0	28	7	2	33	7	9
Inter-tenters "	1,077	22.8	27	4	6	32	0	3
Roving frame tenters (one man per frame) . .	1,580	22.6	25	13	7	29	13	2
Siders (single side) (men and women) . . .	7,863	22.9	21	3	3	24	11	0
Siders (double side) (men and women) . . .	1,088	23.0	29	13	6	38	0	10
Tarawallas (men and women)	2,340	23.1	19	1	0	21	0	3
Doffers (men and women) . .	6,625	23.7	16	1	10	18	0	9
Weavers (one loom) . . .	742	22.1	36	7	9	46	6	3
Weavers (two looms) . . .	17,408	24.6	38	1	1	41	6	11
Weavers (four looms) . . .	1,453	25.7	69	4	4	74	6	11
Grey winders (women) . .	4,565	24.2	16	5	8	18	6	2
Colour winders (women) . .	2,577	21.7	18	0	10	25	13	8
Grey and colour winders (women)	7,142	23.1	16	14	7	20	2	9
Reelers (women)	5,294	23.2	15	14	7	17	11	4

¹ Compiled from *Wages and Unemployment in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry, 1934*, pp. 149-154.

8. — Bonuses and Concessions

The income of Indian workers cannot be completely measured by their cash earnings, for wages in India are frequently supplemented by various forms of bonuses and concessions. The distinction between "bonuses" and "concessions" is that the former are usually payments for some special or additional service, while the latter are in reality forms of indirect payment.

The bonus system has been long known in Indian factories, ¹ the objects usually being to secure regularity of attendance and

¹ GREAT BRITAIN : *Parliamentary Papers*, 1890-1891, Vol. LIX, H. of C., 86, p. 88.

to encourage good work or work of a special quality. In some cases both good attendance and good work are requisite to secure the bonus.¹ In the Bombay Presidency the bonus system is found in a number of industries and may be said to be almost general in the textile mills of Bombay and Ahmedabad.² According to the enquiries made by the Bombay Labour Office in 1926-1927 in 144 cotton mills, over three-fourths paid bonuses for regular attendance, and over one-half paid bonuses for work better than specified standards. In Ahmedabad bonuses were paid more frequently than in Bombay both for regular attendance and for work superior to specified standards. About 120 ginning and pressing factories paid bonuses to their workers, and the bonus system was also found in some Government and local fund factories. In most cases the bonus paid took the form of an annual payment which was dependent on profits, and varied from a gift of clothes to the equivalent of a fortnight's or a month's pay.³

Bonuses are not payable to all classes of workers in the cotton industry. The weavers in Bombay cotton mills, for instance, are not covered by bonus schemes, and no bonus is given in such departments as mixing, blowing, carding, drawing, warping, doubling, sizing, calendering, cloth-folding and maintenance in Sholapur. In 1926 the proportion of workers who received bonuses, as compared with the total number of workers employed, amounted to rather more than one-third in Bombay City, a little over one-half in Sholapur, and about three-fourths in Ahmedabad.⁴

Cost-of-living bonuses became common during and after the war ; in some cases they are still paid, while in others they have been consolidated with the ordinary wages.⁵

The bonus system is apparently not utilised in mining industries. The practice in some collieries of paying a " bonus " to the

¹ *Report on an Enquiry into Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry, 1926*, Government of Bombay, 1930, p. 61.

² ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Memorandum from the Government of Bombay*, p. 165.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-167 ; *Report of an Enquiry into Deductions from Wages or Payments in respect of Fines*, Government of Bombay, 1928, p. 89.

⁴ *Report on an Enquiry into Wages and Hours of Labour in the Cotton Mill Industry, 1926*, Government of Bombay, 1930, pp. 61-65. The actual percentages were respectively 37, 52 and 73.

⁵ *Prices and Wages in India, 1923*, pp. 209 and 214 ; *Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Factories Act in Bengal and Assam, 1925*, p. iv and Appendix 5.

supervisory staff for surplus coal if the aggregate output exceeds the standard tub load multiplied by the number of tubs filled really has the effect of depriving the miners of a part of their legitimate earnings.¹

Bonuses for regular work are paid on the plantations in the south, e.g. the Nilgiris and Coorg. In Assam the term "bonus" was formerly employed to designate the advances of wages made to labourers covered by the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act of 1859. Although penal sanction contracts have been abolished, the bonus (commonly Rs.12 for a man and Rs.8 for a woman) continues to be paid and, in 1929, was still referred to as "girmitt" or agreement money. The Royal Commission was told that as the workers had been accustomed to this lump-sum payment its discontinuance would cause discontent. The Commission, however, indicated that its continuance was due to the persistence of "the old faith in restraint" among planters. "The planter, to his own prejudice, has deliberately allowed the old ideas of the penal contract to linger in the minds of his workers." On many gardens the thumb-impression was taken when the bonus was paid, although this was not done when the worker received his wages. "In theory, the object of the thumb-impression is to bind the labourer by a civil agreement, but as he is not likely to appreciate the difference between this and a penal contract, the practical result is that he believes himself still bound by a penal contract. In a number of instances the bonus is not in fact claimed, which shows that it continues to be regarded as a gift fatal to the liberty of its recipient."²

The practice of granting "concessions" (or "gratuities" as they are called in some instances) is very widespread in India. Concessions take many different forms: land for cultivation on plantations, free or cheap housing, grain and other necessities at wholesale or reduced prices, free fuel, medicines, etc.³ Mention may also be made of the custom of allowing miners a certain quantity of coal for domestic purposes, a quantity which has been estimated to be as high as 4 per cent. of the total output.⁴ Rail-

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 23

² *Ibid.*, pp. 376 and 401.

³ *Annual Report on the Working of the Indian Factories Act in Burma*, 1924, p. 3.

⁴ *Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines in India*, 1924, p. 8.

way workers receive free quarters, uniforms and clothing, which are mainly dictated by service requirements, and free passes, free medical attendance, educational and other concessions, as well as the bonus additions to provident funds, etc., already mentioned.¹

The place of concessions in the remuneration of workers is largest in the plantation industry. In Assam these concessions formed part of the legal requirements for the protection of the workers under the contract system, and the abolition of contracts led only to slight modifications of the existing practices in this respect. The most usual concessions are free housing, medical facilities, firewood, grant of advances without interest, free grazing for cattle, land for cultivation either free or at uneconomic rents, and maternity benefits.² In some gardens monetary concessions are also given to children and to workers unable to work through sickness.³

The Royal Commission found that the workers attached great importance to the grant of land for cultivation. "The garden worker is essentially an agriculturist, and his desire for the possession of a holding which he can cultivate with the help of the members of his family is great. This ambition for private land, if fully satisfied, would remove all desire for garden work, and in the allotment of garden land for private cultivation the planter has, therefore, to study his own interests as well as those of the worker. Hence the worker who desires and is able to set up as an independent cultivator has to move to Government land outside the garden, and private cultivation within the garden is confined to those families which can provide labour on the garden." In 1929 the amount of land held by garden workers as tenants of the garden proprietors was nearly 150,000 acres; in 1935-1936 it was 151,131 acres.⁴

In the matter of concessions, the policy pursued in the Dooars and the Terai is similar to that of Assam. In the Darjeeling district the workers receive free housing and, on most gardens, plots of garden land, free of rent, for private cultivation. The system of granting concessions exists also in the plantations in the south: free housing, medical facilities, free firewood and, in

¹ Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, pp. 146-147.

² *Ibid.*, p. 384.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 384; *Annual Report on the Working of the Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act (XXII of 1932)*, 1935-1936, Statement IX.

some cases, maternity benefits are provided by the employer. Although land for private cultivation is not available to the same extent as in Assam, as the workers return to their villages annually, small plots are allotted for vegetable crops for private consumption.¹

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 399-401.

CHAPTER IX

STANDARD OF LIVING

The information on earnings given in the preceding chapter affords no guidance as to the real wages of Indian workers, and in the absence of systematic compilation of wage statistics and cost-of-living index numbers no estimates of real wages are possible. Nevertheless, there is now available a certain amount of useful information about the standard of living of Indian workers, though this information is largely confined to the results of family budget enquiries made by the Bombay Labour Office and the Burma Labour Statistics Bureau.

The enquiries of the Bombay Labour Office into workers' budgets were the following : (1) an enquiry into 3,076 budgets, comprising 2,473 family budgets and 603 single persons' budgets, of which about half related to factory workers, during the period May 1921 to April 1922¹ ; (2) an enquiry into 902 family budgets of cotton-mill workers in Sholapur for the period May to December 1925² ; and (3) an enquiry into 872 family budgets of cotton-mill and manual workers in Ahmedabad for the period February to August 1926.³

An enquiry into workers' budgets in Rangoon was made by the Burma Labour Statistics Bureau during 1926 and 1927. It covered 3,317 budgets of Indian workers and 992 budgets of Burmese workers, including both skilled and unskilled factory workers, transport workers, casual workers and independent artisans. Indian workers in Burma are mostly immigrants who, although

¹ *Report on an Enquiry into Working-Class Budgets in Bombay.* Bombay, Government Central Press, 1923, p. 1.

² *Report on an Enquiry into Family Budgets of Cotton-Mill Workers in Sholapur City.* Bombay, Government Central Press, 1928, pp. 1-3.

³ *Report on an Enquiry into Working-Class Family Budgets in Ahmedabad.* Bombay, Government Central Press, 1923, pp. 1-2.

married in most cases, leave their wives and children in India ; the Indian budgets therefore were those of single men except in 296 cases ; the Burmese budgets related to families. ¹

Enquiries into the standard of living of industrial workers were also undertaken by various Local Governments for the Royal Commission on Labour in 1930. ² The periods covered by these enquiries were short, they were generally limited to workers whose incomes did not exceed Rs.50 a month, and " children " were taken to be persons under 15 years of age, whereas the Bombay and Burma enquiries had taken 14 years as the age limit. Nevertheless, these enquiries afford valuable information on the standard of living of industrial workers in parts of the country not covered by the other investigations.

The results of these various enquiries are not strictly comparable. Some of them were made as long ago as 1921-1922, when prices were much higher than in subsequent years. This objection is, however, offset to some extent by the fact that falling prices were followed by wage cuts and that there were scarcely any appreciable changes in the standard of living of the working classes until 1929-1930, when the industrial depression affected the income and expenditure of all classes. Another difficulty arises from the restriction of the enquiries in 1930 to the family budgets of the lower income-classes, but as the lower income-classes form by far the majority of industrial workers in India, their average income and expenditure are fairly representative of those of the workers generally. Use will therefore be made of information obtained by all these investigations in this chapter, which will deal with the size of the family in India, family income and expenditure, the budgets of single persons, the structure of budgets, the extent of indebtedness, and the changes in the cost of living.

1. — Size of the Family

In examining family budgets, it is first of all necessary to know the size of the family. i.e. the number of members, includ-

¹ J. J. BENNISON, I.C.S. : *Report on an Enquiry into the Standard and Cost of Living of the Working Classes in Rangoon*, Labour Statistics Bureau, Burma, Rangoon, Printing and Stationery, 1928, pp. 5 and 144.

² ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Evidence*, Vol. XI, Supplementary, 1931 ; *Labour Gazette*, January 1931, pp. 473-493. The period covered by the enquiries was generally from July to September 1930.

ing both wage earners and dependants, who are covered by the budgets. The question is complicated in India because of the fact, already mentioned in Chapter I, that the "family" often includes, in addition to the natural family of husband, wife and unmarried children, the larger family of closely related persons,

AVERAGE SIZE OF WORKING-CLASS FAMILIES IN DIFFERENT CENTRES
IN INDIA ¹

Locality and industry	Number of families	Persons ² living in the family				Dependants living away from the family	Total
		Men	Women	Children	Total		
Bombay (1921-1922), all industries	2,473	1.10	1.10	2.00	4.20	0.60	4.80
Sholapur (1925), textile	902	1.60	1.54	1.43	4.57	0.11	4.68
Ahmedabad (1926), textile and manual	872	1.36	1.21	1.30	3.87	0.13	4.00
Rangoon (1926-1927) ³ all industries (Burmese).	992	—	—	—	3.71	—	3.71
Bombay (1930), ⁴ textile	85	1.35	1.25	0.98	3.58	1.88	5.46
Madras, textile.	79	1.86	1.73	2.23	5.82	0.06	5.88
Madras, printing and book-binding.	50	1.66	1.60	1.66	4.92	0.04	4.96
Coimbatore, textile	96	1.36	1.48	2.05	4.89	0.25	5.14
Cawnpore, textile, engineering and leather works	729	1.30	0.90	1.20	3.40	1.08	4.48
Lucknow, E.I. railway workshops.	137	1.15	0.91	1.42	3.48	1.16	4.64
Gorakhpur, B. and N.W. railway workshops.	161	1.06	0.48	0.63	2.17	2.79	4.96
Nagpur, textile and others	102	1.41	1.41	1.72	4.54	0.17	4.71
Jubbulpore, textile and potteries.	67	1.13	1.10	1.34	3.57	—	3.57
United Provinces, railways ⁵	253	1.28	1.30	1.75	4.33	0.91	5.24
Bihar and Orissa, railways ⁶	213	1.23	1.43	2.18	4.84	0.69	5.53
Bengal, railways ⁷	156	1.16	1.11	1.51	3.78	1.53	5.31
South Indian railways. ⁸	283	1.36	1.73	2.69	5.78	—	5.78

¹ Compiled from reports on respective enquiries referred to above.

² The Bombay (1921-1922), Sholapur, Ahmedabad, and Rangoon enquiries counted persons under 14 years of age as children; in the other cases persons under 15 years of age are shown as children.

³ Complete figures are not available.

⁴ All the subsequent enquiries relate to 1930.

⁵ Centres selected for this enquiry were Cawnpore, Lucknow, Moradabad, Bareilly, Benares and Monghal Serai.

⁶ Selected centres for this enquiry were Jamalpur, Gaya, Sasaram, Patna, Dinapore and Jhajha.

⁷ This enquiry was made at Howrah, Moolooah, Bandel Junction, Burdwan, Rampur Hat, Asansol and Azimganj.

⁸ This enquiry relates to Madras, Tanjore, Madura, Erode, Calicut and 14 other towns.

often including unmarried sisters, married daughters and married sons and their wives. Some idea of the extent of the joint family system may be had from the enquiries in Sholapur and Cawnpore, where 56.21 per cent. and 55.80 per cent. of the families respectively were found to be joint families.

The average size of the working-class family in different centres is shown above. It is seen that the size varies from 3.57 persons per family in textile mills and pottery works in Jubbulpore to 5.88 persons per family in the textile mills in Madras. The small size of the families in Jubbulpore and Rangoon (Burmese families) may, however, be more apparent than real, as in both cases the number of persons living away from the family is not known. The number of absentee dependants is in fact an important feature of the Indian family; the table shows that it varies from 0.04 persons per family among printers and book-binders in Madras to 2.79 persons among workers in the railway-workshops in Gorakhpur. The small number of absentee dependants among Madras workers is probably due to the fact that the workers have mostly settled down in Madras and have few relatives in the villages; incidentally, it may be pointed out that this is an example of the growth in India of an industrial working class completely detached from the land, to which reference was made in Chapter II. By far the largest number of industrial workers, however, have family relations in the village, as indicated by the percentages of absentee dependants.

The above table also shows the composition of the family as far as it could be ascertained; but the age and sex of absentee dependants is often not ascertainable, so that the exact number of men, women and children in the family is not given. Of the persons living in the family, the proportion of men varies from 1.06 to 1.86, of women from 0.48 to 1.73, and of children from 0.63 to 2.69. While there are families without children or with only one child, the predominant type of family is made up of one man, one woman and two or more children in most centres.¹ Of the 378 natural families in Sholapur, for instance, 24 per cent. were childless, 27 per cent. had one child, 25 per cent. two

¹ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA: *Evidence*, Vol. XI (Supplementary), p. 206.

children, 12 per cent. three children, and the remainder four or more children.¹

As regards the proportion of earners and dependants, the enquiries showed that out of every 100 families with resident members, the proportion of earners and dependants was respectively 154 and 266 in Bombay, 196 and 261 in Sholapur, 166 and 221 in Ahmedabad, 154 and 217 in Rangoon, and 126 and 214 in Cawnpore, the percentage of earners being respectively 37, 43, 43, 42 and 37, as indicated by the analysis of the families in the table below. It will also be seen that the proportions of earners vary by age, sex and locality. In every 100 families the number of men earners varied from 104 to 149, of women earners from 5 to 44, and of child earners from 2 to 8. The proportion of women earners is thus small and that of child earners negligible.

PROPORTIONS OF EARNERS AND DEPENDANTS IN THE FAMILY¹

Centre	Average number resident in the family	Average number of dependants	Average number of earners				
			Men	Women	Children under 14	Total	
						Number	Per cent. of total
Bombay (1921-1922)	4.20	2.66	1.04	0.42	0.08	1.54	37
Sholapur (1925)	4.57	2.61	1.49	0.42	0.05	1.96	43
Ahmedabad (1926)	3.87	2.21	1.25	0.37	0.04	1.66	43
Rangoon (1926-1927)							
(Burmese families)	3.71	2.17	1.07	0.44	0.03	1.54	42
Cawnpore (1930)	3.40	2.14	1.19	0.03	0.02	1.26	37

¹ Compiled from reports on respective enquiries referred to above.

The following table shows the number of wage earners in the family. The families having one earner were a little over one-third in Ahmedabad and over three-fourths in Cawnpore, and those having two earners varied from less than one-fifth in Cawnpore to two-fifths in Ahmedabad. On the other hand, over one-fifth of the families in Ahmedabad had as many as three earners or more.

¹ Of the remainder, 30 families had four children, 8 families five children, and 1 family each with six, seven and eight children, while 2 families were composed of the husband and two wives and 3 families of the husband, two wives and three children. Cf. *Report on an Enquiry into Family Budgets of Cotton-Mill Workers in Sholapur City*, p. 12.

NUMBER OF WAGE EARNERS IN THE FAMILY ¹

Centre	Number of families	Percentage of families having :			Total
		one earner	two earners	three or more earners	
Bombay (1921-1922) . . .	2,473	53.50	39.10	7.40	100
Sholapur (1925)	902	36.00	40.20	23.80	100
Ahmedabad (1926)	872	48.39	39.91	11.70	100
Rangoon (1926-1927)					
(Burmese families) . . .	992	55.50	35.50	8.50	100
Cawnpore (1930)	729	78.30	18.50	3.20	100
Madras (1930)	79	—	53.20	46.80	100
Coimbatore (1929-1930) .	96	51.00	32.00	17.00	100

¹ Compiled from reports on respective enquiries referred to above.

2. — Family Income

The variations in family income shown by the enquiries were due mainly to local differences in industrial development, wages and standard of living. The results of the enquiries were also affected by the fact that some covered all classes of workers, skilled and unskilled, while others were concerned only with the lower-income classes. Another factor in variation is the extent of subsidiary sources of income. Reference was made in the last chapter to bonuses and concessions, but there are other sources of subsidiary income. In Ahmedabad, for example, it was found that the average income from subsidiary sources was Rs.3-5-2 out of a total budget of Rs.44-7-2, i.e. 7.4 per cent. ; this subsidiary income was derived from such varied sources as landed property, firewood brought from jungles, cowdung cakes, selling of milk, fish, vegetables, etc., odd jobs, tips, and pensions. ¹

The best statistics of average monthly earnings of working-class families are those of the enquiries made in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Sholapur and Rangoon by the Bombay Labour Office and the Burma Statistical Bureau. While the figures are not strictly comparable, owing to the differences in the dates and range of the enquiries, they show that the family earnings were highest

¹ *Report on an Enquiry into Working-Class Family Budgets in Ahmedabad*, p. 13.

in the case of Burmese working-class families in Rangoon and lowest for cotton-mill workers in Sholapur ; an interesting point is that in Rangoon the earnings of the Telugu working-class families were higher than those of the Tamil working-class families, the Telugus and Tamils being Indian immigrants.

AVERAGE MONTHLY EARNINGS OF SOME WORKING-CLASS FAMILIES

Locality and description of families	Date of enquiry	Number of families	Average number of persons or units per family	Average monthly earnings
				Rs. a. p.
Bombay, working class ¹ . . .	1921-1922	2,473	4.20	52 4 6
Sholapur, cotton-mill workers ²	1925	902	4.68	39 14 10
Ahmedabad, working class ³	1926	872	4.00	44 7 2
Rangoon, Burmese working class ⁴	1926-1927	992	3.71	58 8 3
Rangoon, Tamil working class ⁵	1926-1927	157	2.89	41 4 9
Rangoon, Telegu working class ⁶	1926-1927	139	2.58	45 5 10
Bombay City, working class ⁷	1932-1933	1,469	3.70	50 1 7

¹ Cotton mills, docks, municipality, railway and engineering workshops : *Report on an Enquiry into Working Class Budgets in Bombay*, pp. 6 and 10.

² *Report on an Enquiry into Family Budgets of Cotton-Mill Workers in Sholapur City*, pp. 3, 6, 62.

³ Cotton mills and manual workers : *Report on an Enquiry into Working Class Family Budgets in Ahmedabad*, pp. 1, 3 and 13.

⁴ J. J. BENNISON : *Report on an Enquiry into the Standard and Cost of Living of the Working Classes in Rangoon*, pp. 16, 96-97.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 34 and 146.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 34 and 147.

⁷ *Wages and Unemployment in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry*, 1934, p. 217.

The following table gives, on the basis of enquiries in Bombay, Sholapur and Ahmedabad, a classification of families by income groups. It shows that the most common income was between Rs.40 and Rs.50 in Bombay and Ahmedabad, relating to one-third and one-fourth of the families respectively, and between Rs.30 and Rs.40 in Sholapur relating to one-fourth of the families. It will also be seen that the monthly incomes of three-fourths of the families in Bombay ranged from Rs.40 to Rs.70, of over two-thirds of the families in Sholapur from Rs.20 to Rs.50, and of four-fifths of the families in Ahmedabad from Rs.20 to Rs.60, indicating that family incomes were higher in Bombay than in Ahmedabad and Sholapur.

**CLASSIFICATION OF FAMILIES BY INCOME GROUPS
IN DIFFERENT CENTRES ¹**

Income groups	Families in Bombay, 1921-1922		Families in Sholapur, 1925		Families in Ahmedabad, 1926	
	Number	Per cent. of total	Number	Per cent. of total	Number	Per cent. of total
Below Rs.20.	—	—	75	8.3	17	1.95
Rs.20 and below Rs.30	68 ²	2.7	207	23.0	146	16.74
Rs.30 " 40	272	11.0	231	25.6	182	20.87
Rs.40 " 50	834	33.7	185	20.5	220	25.23
Rs.50 " 60	539	21.8	99	11.0	157	18.01
Rs.60 " 70	484	19.6	49	5.4	73	8.37
Rs.70 and over	276	11.2	56	6.2	77	8.83
Total	2,473	100	902	100	872	100

¹ Compiled from the reports on enquiries referred to above.

² Refers to all incomes below Rs.30.

A further point of interest is the proportion of the family income earned by the adult male members as compared with the earnings of the women and children. An analysis of the family incomes of working-class families in Bombay, Sholapur, Ahmedabad and Rangoon shows that from about four-fifths to about nine-tenths of the incomes are earned by the men and from about one-tenth to one-eighth by the women ; the contribution of the children to the family income is almost negligible.

**CONTRIBUTIONS OF MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN TO FAMILY INCOMES
IN SOME CENTRES ¹**

Centre	Total budget	Average monthly income	Percentage of total income from :				
			Men	Women	Child- ren	Others ²	Total
		Rs. a. p.					
Bombay (1921-1922).	2,473	52 4 6	84.4	13.5	2.1	—	100
Sholapur (1925)	902	39 14 10	85.0	8.9	0.8	5.3	100
Ahmedabad (1926)	872	44 7 2	79.3	12.6	0.6	7.5	100
Rangoon (1926-1927). Burmese.	992	58 8 3	89.8	9.8	0.4	—	100

¹ Compiled from the reports on enquiries referred to above.

² Presumably members of the family other than father, mother and children.

In the Rangoon enquiry family incomes were calculated

according to the Lusk scale.¹ Under this scale an adult male is taken as unity, a woman as 0.83, a child between 10 and 14 years of age as 0.83, a child between 6 and 10 years as 0.70 and a child under 6 years as 0.50. The average family of 3.71 persons was thus equivalent to a family of 3.01 units. The income per unit was obtained by dividing the income of the family by the size as expressed in units. The average monthly incomes in the Burmese families are shown in the table below. It will be seen that over three-fifths of the families had incomes ranging from Rs.56-13-11 to Rs.59-3-3.

CLASSIFICATION OF BURMESE FAMILIES BY INCOME
CLASSES IN RANGOON¹

Income per unit	Number of families	Number of units	Total income
			Rs. a. p.
Under Rs.15	167	4.24	54 1 5
Rs.15 and under Rs.20 . . .	325	3.28	56 13 11
Rs.20 " " 25 . . .	280	2.65	59 3 3
Rs.25 " " 30 . . .	122	2.24	60 10 2
Rs.30 and over	98	1.99	65 13 8
All incomes	992	3.01	58 8 3

¹ Compiled from *Report on an Enquiry into the Standard and Cost of Living of the Working Classes in Rangoon*, pp. 96-97.

3. — Family Expenditure

The next table brings together the data for average monthly family incomes and average monthly family expenditure, and shows the percentage of expenditure in the principal consumption groups as well as the balance of income remaining. It will be seen that both income and expenditure were highest in the case of Burmese families in Rangoon, that income was lowest in the case of railway workers in the United Provinces, and that expenditure was lowest in the case of pottery and textile workers in Jubbulpore; figures for expenditure were not, however, available for the railways in the United Provinces, Bihar and

¹ *Report on an Enquiry into the Standard and Cost of Living of the Working Classes in Rangoon*, p. 12.

Orissa, and Bengal. The balance of income over expenditure was highest in the case of the Tamil and Telugu families in Rangoon, but these workers have to support the members of their families who remain in India. In some cases the expenditure was higher than the income; thus, the family budgets of textile workers in Coimbatore showed a deficit of Rs.4-13-1 or 14.6 per cent. of the total expenditure.

There are naturally some variations in the percentage expenditure on various consumption groups. Expenditure on rent is affected by the fact that some workers are given free housing or housing at nominal rents, while the expenditure shown under "miscellaneous" tends to increase with increased income,

ANALYSIS OF SOME FAMILY BUDGETS OF INDUSTRIAL WORKERS IN INDIA ¹

Locality and industry	Number of budgets	Average monthly income	Average monthly expenditure	Percentage expenditure on main consumption groups						Balance
				Food	Clothing	Rent	Fuel and lighting	Household requisites	Miscellaneous	
		Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.							Rs. a. p.
Bombay ² (1921-1922), all industries	2,473	52 4 6	47 14 5	52.32	8.40	7.67	7.29	2.26	18.06	4 6 1
Sholapur ² (1925), textile.	902	39 14 10	37 13 11	52.76	12.70	6.72	10.28	1.08	16.46	2 0 11
Ahmedabad (1926), textile and manual.	872	44 7 2	39 5 8	57.90	9.15	11.74	7.04	1.16	12.71	5 1 6
Rangoon (1926-1927), all industries:										
Burmese.	992	58 8 3	56 10 11	52.80	10.60	13.90	5.20	2.60	15.00	1 13 4
Tamil.	157	41 4 9	35 15 7	56.40	8.20	6.90	3.90	2.50	22.10	5 5 2
Telugu.	139	45 5 10	38 8 5	56.40	6.50	10.30	4.20	1.80	20.80	6 13 16
Bombay (1930), textile.	85	55 0 9	51 9 4	57.14	7.33	10.58	7.12	3.14	14.72	3 7 5
Calcutta (1930), ³ textile.	125	34 7 0	32 1 6	64.9	7.5	4.74	7.13	1.72	14.01	1 5 6
Madras (1930), textile.	75	33 12 3	32 9 7	60.71	3.84	8.29	7.54	0.29	10.33	1 2 8
Madras, printing and book-binding	50	31 11 2	35 13 6	55.24	4.50	13.08	7.61	0.52	19.05	4 2 4
Coimbatore (1930), textile.	96	28 3 2	33 0 3	57.70	6.21	5.05	6.81	0.41	23.79	4 13 1
Cawnpore (1930), textile, engineering and leather works.	729	25 8 6	24 14 10	48.12	7.44	8.76	6.02	1.75	27.91	0 9 8
Lucknow (1930), E.I. railway workshops	137	23 10 0	23 8 3	52.04	8.16	6.73	7.38	1.46	24.23	0 1 9
Gorakhpur (1930), B. and N.W. railway workshops	161	24 3 2	23 15 5	44.93	7.33	3.06	4.51	1.71	38.46	0 3 9
Nagpur (1930), textile and others.	102	29 8 0	30 8 0	58.13	8.32	2.15	7.99	1.56	21.85	1 0 0 ⁵
Jubbulpore (1930), potteries and textile and others.	67	23 0 0	22 12 0	66.71	9.00	1.15	4.59	2.24	16.31	0 4 0
United Provinces (1930), railways	253	22 0 0	—	57.30	8.80	4.80	6.10	2.10	20.90	—
Bihar and Orissa (1930), railways.	213	24 0 0	—	59.10	6.80	1.80	4.40	1.80	20.10	—
Bengal (1930), railways.	156	27 2 4 ⁵	—	52.70	5.70	4.60	4.40	1.40	31.20	—

¹ Compiled from the reports on enquiries referred to above. For explanations see footnotes to table relating to the average size of families (p. 273).

² The figures for Bombay and Sholapur have been adjusted to make them comparable with those for Ahmedabad.

³ Dr A. C. Roy Chowdhury: *Report on an Enquiry into the Standard of Living of Jute-Mill Workers in Bengal, Calcutta, 1930*, pp. 8 and 11.

⁴ Figures for expenditure are not available.

⁵ Passive balance.

though interest on debts and remittances to absentee dependants, which are also included under miscellaneous, affect the percentage. It will be noticed that, except in the case of railway workers in Bengal and Bihar and Orissa and the workers in the B. and N.W. railway workshops, over three-fourths of the total income is expended on food, clothing, rent, fuel, and lighting and household requisites, leaving small margins for miscellaneous items, including education and recreation.

As an example of the variations in percentage expenditure on main consumption groups by different income classes, the following table gives figures drawn from the Ahmedabad enquiry. It will be seen that the percentage of expenditure on food, clothing and miscellaneous tends to increase with increasing income, while the percentage of expenditure for fuel and lighting and rent decreases.

GROUP PERCENTAGE EXPENDITURE OF FAMILIES BY
INCOME CLASSES IN AHMEDABAD, 1926 ¹

Income classes	Number of budgets	Food	Fuel and lighting	Clothing	Household requisites	House rent	Miscellaneous	Total
Below Rs.20	17	56.23	9.28	8.28	1.05	16.22	8.94	100
Rs.20 and below Rs.30	146	56.39	8.08	9.00	1.16	14.18	11.19	100
Rs.30 " " " 40	182	56.84	7.36	9.19	1.24	13.11	12.26	100
Rs.40 " " " 50	220	58.33	7.12	9.62	1.17	11.36	12.40	100
Rs.50 " " " 60	157	58.09	6.83	9.37	1.16	10.72	13.83	100
Rs.60 " " " 70	73	57.82	6.32	9.63	1.10	11.97	13.16	100
Rs.70 " " " 80	45	61.18	6.69	9.60	1.12	9.31	12.10	100
Rs.80 " " " 90	32	57.66	6.05	10.15	1.10	10.36	14.68	100
All incomes . .	872	57.90	7.04	9.45	1.16	11.74	12.71	100

¹ Report on an Enquiry into Working-Class Family Budgets in Ahmedabad, 1928, p. 14.

More recent data on the variations in percentage expenditure by various income classes on main consumption groups are available in respect of 730 budgets in Cawnpore. The following table, in which the budgets are divided into four income classes, shows that as income increases the percentage of expenditure tends to decrease in the case of food, clothing, rent, fuel and lighting and household requisites, and to increase in the case of miscellaneous expenditure. It will also be seen that the monthly

expenditure of 128 families, or about 18 per cent., exceeded the monthly income.

GROUP PERCENTAGE EXPENDITURE OF FAMILIES BY
INCOME CLASSES IN CAWNPORE, 1930 ¹

Income classes	Number of budgets	Average monthly income	Average monthly expenditure	Percentage of expenditure on :					
				Food	Cloth- ing and foot- wear	Fuel and light- ing	Rent	House- hold requis- ites	Mis- cell- ane- ous
		Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.						
Rs.15 and below	128	12 15 11	13 11 9	48.10	8.07	6.82	9.04	1.82	26.15
Above Rs.15 and up to Rs.30.	380	22 2 6	21 13 4	48.52	7.61	6.42	9.43	1.84	26.18
Above Rs.30 and up to Rs.40.	145	34 0 8	33 6 33	47.62	7.20	5.63	8.64	1.73	29.18
Above Rs.40 and up to Rs.50.	76	45 6 11	43 2 9	47.79	7.07	5.12	7.22	1.49	31.31
Total.	729	25 8 6	24 14 10	48.12	7.44	6.02	8.76	1.75	27.91

¹ Compiled from ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Evidence*, Vol. XI, pp. 67-92.

4. — Single Persons' Budgets

Besides family budgets, a number of single persons' budgets are available in the case of workers in such cities as Bombay and Rangoon. The income of over three-fifths of the single persons in all classes of industries in Bombay in 1921-1922 was between Rs.30 and Rs.50 a month ; the average monthly income was Rs. 43-10-3, ¹ as compared with Rs.31-12-7 in the case of 68 single persons (including 10 women) in cotton mills in 1930. The figure for average monthly earnings obtained by the Cotton Wage Census of 1926 was Rs.32-14-1. The difference in earnings between 1921-1922 and 1926 is mostly due to reductions in wages, while that between 1926 and 1930 seems to be the consequence of the shorter days worked owing to *hartal* (cessation of work) and unemployment, the latter being the result of the industrial depression. ²

Single persons' budgets in Rangoon relate to Indian immi-

¹ Report on an Enquiry into Working-Class Budgets in Bombay, 1923, p. 35.

² Labour Gazette, January 1931, p. 483.

grants such as Tamils, Telugus, Uriyas, Hindustanis and Chittagonians. The most common income of the Tamils, the Telugus and the Uriyas was between Rs.20 and Rs.35, and that of the Hindustanis and the Chittagonians between Rs.20 and Rs.30.¹

The income, expenditure, percentage expenditure on consumption groups and balance of single persons' budgets are shown in the table below. It will be seen that both income and expenditure were highest in Bombay in 1921-1922, when wages and prices were high, as noted above, and that, of the other budgets, income was highest in the case of the Uriyas and expenditure highest in the case of the textile workers in Bombay in 1930. It will also be seen that both the percentage expenditure and the balance varied considerably. As in the case of the family budgets, food, clothing, rent, fuel and lighting and house requisites accounted for over two-thirds of the expenditure, leaving less than one-third and in some cases as little as one-tenth for miscellaneous items, including education and recreation.

SOME SINGLE PERSONS' BUDGETS AMONG INDUSTRIAL WORKERS
IN INDIA¹

Locality, race and industry	Number of budgets	Average monthly income	Average monthly expenditure	Percentage expenditure on consumption group						Balance
				Food	Clothing	Rent	Fuel and lighting	Household requisites	Miscellaneous	
Bombay (1921-1922), all industries . . .	603	Rs. a. p. 43 10 3	Rs. a. p. 31 1 0	54.5	6.2	7.2	1.7	—	30.4	Rs. a. p. 12 9 3
Rangoon (1926-1927), all industries										
Tamils . . .	132	27 7 8	17 12 3	54.0	5.9	7.4	5.0	2.3	25.4	9 12 5
Telugus . . .	1,339	28 11 10	19 11 10	53.6	6.2	7.3	4.7	2.0	26.1	9 3 0
Uriyas . . .	128	35 0 3	20 2 8	51.2	6.7	7.9	4.8	2.1	27.8	14 13 7
Hindustanis . . .	768	26 0 1	14 13 5	61.0	9.4	10.2	5.9	2.6	10.9	11 2 8
Chittagonians	654	29 5 3	17 5 1	60.0	9.7	7.5	4.6	2.2	16.0	12 0 2
Bombay (1930), textile . . .	68	31 12 7	21 13 4	60.81	7.13	5.70	0.93	2.48	22.95	9 15 3

¹ Compiled from reports on the respective enquiries referred to above.

¹ Report on an Enquiry into the Standard and Cost of Living of the Working Classes in Rangoon, pp. 112-117.

5. — Budgetary Items

The tables in the preceding section have given the percentages of expenditure on main consumption groups. It is the purpose of the present section to give some indication of the principal items in each consumption group.

Food

As shown in the tables above, the expenditure on foodstuffs is, except in two cases, more than half the total expenditure in the case of both family and single persons' budgets, and of this expenditure the largest part is on staple articles of diet. The staple article differs in different centres and is either rice, wheat, *jowari* or *bajre* (two of the Indian millets), or a combination of any two of these products. A considerable number of workers, especially Hindus, are vegetarians, who mainly consume cereals, pulses, *ghee* (clarified butter), and sweetmeats. Mohammedans eat both mutton and beef; beef is a prohibited food to Hindus, although some of them may take mutton. Fish is the chief protein food in Bengal, Madras and Burma. Milk is used by all classes of workers wherever it can be had, but it is costly and pure milk is rarely available in cities.

The percentage expenditure on different kinds of foodstuffs in Bombay, Sholapur and Ahmedabad, as determined by prices, is shown in the table below. More than half of the expenditure is on cereals: Bombay and Sholapur workers spent 17 per cent. of

PERCENTAGE EXPENDITURE ON DIFFERENT ARTICLES
OF FOOD IN DIFFERENT CENTRES ¹

Centre	Family Budgets	Cereals	Pulses	Fish, meat, milk and ghee	Vegetables and fruits	Others	Total
Bombay . . .	2,473	31.66	2.53	9.05	2.99	10.52	56.75
Sholapur . . .	902	25.00	3.50	7.91	2.50	10.34	49.25
Ahmedabad . .	872	29.81	3.73	10.83	4.30	9.20	57.90

¹ Compiled from reports on enquiries mentioned above.

their total expenditure on rice and *jowari* respectively, and Ahmedabad workers 11 per cent. on rice and 12 per cent. on wheat. Pulses and animal products are the chief protein foods and *ghee* (clarified butter) and various kinds of vegetable oils supply most of the fat. *Ghee* is relatively dear and the higher percentage of expenditure on animal food in Ahmedabad is due to the consumption of *ghee*, which was 6.39 per cent. of the total expenditure. Vegetables and fruits form rather a small item of consumption. Among other foodstuffs the most important are sugar, sweetmeats and condiments.

A very interesting study of various foodstuffs and their caloric value was made by the Burma Labour Statistics Bureau, as shown in the table below. It will be seen that the percentage of calories obtained from cereals was 73 for the Burmese, 74 for the Hindustanis, and a little over 76 for the Tamils, the Telugus, the Uriyas and the Chittagonians, that the percentage of calories obtained from pulses was 2.7 for the Burmese, between 6 and 7 for the Tamils, the Telugus and the Uriyas, and about 9 for the Chittagonians and 14 for the Hindustanis, and that of calories from meat, fish and milk varied from 0.9 per cent. for the Hindustanis to 8.4 per cent. for the Burmese. The amount of calories consumed per day per unit varied from 3,298 in the case of the Uriyas to 2,592 in the case of the Burmese. The Burman is usually a skilled or semi-skilled labourer and is rarely engaged in hard manual

GROSS CALORIES CONSUMED PER DAY PER UNIT BY DIFFERENT
CLASSES OF WORKERS IN RANGOON ¹

Commodity	Burmese		Tamils		Telugus		Uriyas		Hindustanis		Chittagonians	
	Num- ber	Per cent.	Num- ber	Per cent.	Num- ber	Per cent.	Num- ber	Per cent.	Num- ber	Per cent.	Num- ber	Per cent.
Rice	1,845	71.2	2,261	74.2	2,329	72.3	2,464	74.7	1,453	45.5	2,122	71.6
Wheat flour	47	1.8	79	2.6	147	4.6	84	2.5	900	28.3	142	4.8
Pulses	71	2.7	206	6.8	200	6.2	209	6.3	449	14.1	272	9.2
Fish	73	2.8	41	1.3	45	1.4	44	1.3	7	0.2	62	2.1
Meat	109	4.2	47	1.5	53	1.7	43	1.3	5	0.2	35	1.2
Milk	25	0.9	26	0.9	29	0.9	36	1.1	15	0.5	31	1.1
Sugar and fat	62	2.4	68	2.2	73	2.3	75	2.3	45	1.5	75	2.5
Ghee	—	—	1	—	1	—	25	0.8	242	4.5	—	—
Vegetable oils	268	10.4	162	5.3	172	5.4	167	5.1	81	2.5	142	4.8
Fruit and vegetables	92	3.6	160	5.2	166	5.2	151	4.6	87	2.7	81	2.7
Total	2,592	100.0	3,051	100.0	3,215	100.0	3,298	100.0	3,184	100.0	2,962	100.0

¹ Compiled from *Report on an Enquiry into the Standard and Cost of Living of the Working Classes in Rangoon*, pp. 19 and 28.

work. He therefore needs fewer calories than the Telugus or the Uriyas, who are usually engaged in hard manual labour.

The nature and sources from which the calories are derived, as well as the absorbability of the calories, are an important consideration in judging the quality of food. The calories derived from food of animal origin are more easily absorbed than those from cereals and pulses. From this point of view the quality of food-stuffs consumed by different races in Rangoon is indicated in the table below. It will be seen that the percentage of calories obtained from food of animal origin, that is, from meat, fish, milk, eggs, etc., varies from 8.5 per cent. in the case of the Burmese to 4.8 per cent. in the case of the Tamils, the Telugus and the Uriyas, indicating that in spite of the lower amount of calories consumed per day per unit, the Burmese have food of better quality than other races.

GROSS CALORIES OF PROTEIN, CARBOHYDRATES
AND FAT CONSUMED PER DAY PER UNIT BY DIFFERENT CLASSES
OF WORKERS IN RANGOON ¹

Class of workers	Protein	Carbo- hydrates	Fat	Total	Animal	Vege- table	Percentage of calories :	
							of animal origin	from protein
Burmese	287	1,870	435	2,592	221	2,371	8.5	11.1
Tamils, Telugus, and Uriyas . . .	349	2,544	318	3,211	154	3,057	4.8	10.9
Hindustanis. . .	388	2,475	321	3,184	172	3,012	5.4	12.2
Chittagonians . .	353	2,334	275	2,962	158	2,804	5.3	11.9

¹ Op. cit., pp. 21 and 29.

CLOTHING

Under the climatic conditions of India, expenditure on dress is not such a heavy proportional item of expenditure as in European countries. Men clothe the lower part of the body in *dhotis*, *lungis*, or pyjamas or trousers, and women wear skirts or *sari*, which cover the whole body. The clothing for the upper part of the body may be *banyan* (undershirts), shirts, waistcoats or coats, and *chaddar* (wrappers) for men, and bodices or jackets, also *chaddar* for women. Most of the men, however, do not clothe the upper part of the body except in winter. Head-dress

may be a cap, *pagri* or turban, but is not universal. Footwear may be sandals or shoes, but many men and women go bare-footed. Customs as regards dress vary somewhat between Hindus and Muslims: Hindus, for instance, prefer *dhotis* and Muslims *lungis* or trousers; the head-dress often indicates the race and religion of the wearer.

Except in the case of Sholapur, as shown in the table below, the average expenditure for men's clothing is higher than that for women; this is especially the case among the Burmese.

VARIATION IN PERCENTAGE EXPENDITURE ON CLOTHING
BY AGE, SEX AND LOCALITY IN DIFFERENT CENTRES ¹

Centre	Percentage expenditure on clothing for				
	Men	Women	Children	Footwear ² , bedding, etc.	Total
Bombay	3.01	3.24	1.19	1.59	9.63
Sholapur.	4.85	4.97	1.43	0.61	11.86
Ahmedabad.	4.22	3.15	1.09	0.99	9.45
Rangoon (Burmese)	5.07	3.98	1.54	—	10.56 ³

¹ Compiled from reports on respective enquiries referred to above.

² This column is added, as footwear was not included under clothing in the Bombay, Sholapur and Ahmedabad enquiries.

³ The exact figure: round figures were used in the table on family budgets.

MISCELLANEOUS

The next most important expenditure group of the family budget is that connected with living accommodation, i.e. house rent, fuel and lighting and household requisites. The question of housing and rents will be dealt with in the next chapter. The fuel required by the Indian worker is mostly firewood for cooking; for the purpose of lighting, kerosene or some vegetable oil, e.g. castor or mustard oil, is used. Gas and electricity are rarely found in workers' dwellings; electricity is sometimes available in Burma. Household requisites are few in number, consisting of cots or *charpoy*s, mats, mattresses, blankets, pillows, cooking pots and a few pieces of simple furniture.

Other expenditure which may be considered to be particularly significant of the standard of living of the workers includes recreational and educational items and usually varies directly with the size of the family income. The information

given in the budget enquiries on these subjects, however, is probably not very reliable, as it comprises casual expenditure on a wide range of items, the most common of which are haircutting, hair oil, washing and soap, tobacco, betel, liquor, medicine, schooling, travel, amusements, remittances to absentee members of the family, and interest on debts.

Travelling expenses usually mean the cost of the worker's journey to and from his native place and the place of work. As noted before, most Indian workers are migrants and they visit their native places about once a year. The average expenditure on that account was Rs.0-15-15 for 67.85 per cent. of the total families in Sholapur, Rs.1-2-4 for 51.38 per cent. in Ahmedabad and Rs.1-9-10 for 64.71 per cent. of the families in Bombay (1930). Expenses are also incurred in some cases for the journey to and from the undertakings; for instance, 35.4 per cent. of the Bombay families spent an average of Rs.2-2-9 per month for this purpose in 1921-1922.

As regards medicines and medical assistance, most workers, as well as the other members of their families in some centres, receive help from their employers, but there is a certain amount of expenditure under this heading. In Bombay, Ahmedabad and Rangoon (Burmese families only) for instance, 11.3 per cent., 26.49 per cent. and 13.48 per cent. of the families spent respectively Rs.1-2-9, Rs.0-7-6 and Rs.0-12-8 per month on the average.

Expenditure on schooling for the children appears in a certain number of workers' family budgets. Detailed information, however, was only collected by the Bombay and Rangoon enquiries. The number of families incurring expenditure on schooling was 21 per cent. in the former city and 12.4 per cent. in the latter, the average cost being Rs.0-13-10 and Rs.2-1-7 respectively per family.

Recreation is a small item of expenditure, owing both to the lack of facilities and the low level of incomes. The percentage of families who spent money on recreation was 19 in Bombay, 21.84 in Sholapur and 34.2 in Rangoon (Burmese families), the average monthly expenditure of these families being Rs.1-3-7, Rs.0-9-7 and Rs.2-2-2 respectively.

Among the items of miscellaneous consumption must be mentioned betel, including nuts and other accessories, and tobacco, including *bidi* (cigarettes) and other preparations. Betel is a kind of leaf, to which are added a special kind of nut, lime

and condiments; it is chewed all over the country and among all classes of people, including the workers. For instance, 71 per cent. of the families in Bombay (1921-1922) and 84 per cent. of the Burmese families in Rangoon used betel. Tobacco is both smoked and chewed all over the country; in many localities, e.g. Ahmedabad, even women and children smoke. It is smoked either as *bidi* or in the form of a paste which is a mixture of tobacco and molasses. The number of families using tobacco was 96 per cent. in Bombay, 88 per cent. in Ahmedabad and 97 per cent. in Rangoon. Betel and tobacco form in fact the petty luxuries of the working classes, and the percentage expenditure on them varied from 3.71 in Rangoon to 5.6 in Bombay.

The consumption of liquor, both foreign and country-made, has become a common habit among many workers. Mohammedans are prohibited from drinking alcohol, and its consumption was almost unknown among high-caste Hindus, but country-made liquor or *toddy* has long been in use among lower-class Hindus and aboriginal races. In more recent times the consumption of foreign liquor, such as beer, wine and whisky, has spread to a small extent among the educated classes and even among the working classes. Information regarding expenditure on liquor is difficult to obtain as most of the workers are averse to giving such information. The Bombay enquiries estimated that among very low-class families, such as scavengers, the average expenditure on liquor would amount to at least 8 to 10 per cent. of the total income. The proportion of families using liquor was shown as 26 per cent. in Ahmedabad, 43 per cent. in Sholapur and 72 per cent. in Bombay, and the percentage expenditure was respectively 1.39, 2.27 and 4.1. Although the proportion of the families using liquor was relatively small in Sholapur and Ahmedabad, there were also families which consumed *bhang* and *ganja* (two of the Indian hems) and opium, on which the average percentage expenditures were respectively 0.37 and 0.52.

Expenditure on liquor is higher in the case of single persons' budgets. Liquor was an item in over 91 per cent. of the 603 single persons' budgets included in the Bombay enquiry and the average amount spent was Rs.3-6-5 a month, the average expenditure on liquor for all single persons' budgets being 10 per cent. as compared with 4.1 per cent. in the case of family budgets. In Rangoon the average monthly expenditure on liquor in individual budgets was Rs.1-7-5 among the Tamils and Rs.2-0-7 among the

Telugus. The excessive consumption of liquor among the Telugus has been explained on the ground that most of the hard manual work in Rangoon is done by them and that when their work is over they are often too tired to take ordinary food. Other factors conducive to drinking among other classes of workers are bad housing conditions, absence of home life and lack of healthy recreation.

There is other evidence of the consumption of drinks and drugs than that contained in the family budget enquiries. Among coal miners in the Dhanbad subdivision, where 55,000 men workers were employed in 1928, the expenditure on country spirit alone was Rs.670,000 in 1928-1929 ; the expenditure on rice beer is not known, but the licence fees realised by the Government amounted to Rs.120,000 in that year. As regards the consumption of *ganja* and intoxicating drugs in other forms, no information on expenditure is available. The Royal Commission on Labour estimated that the total expenditure on drinks and drugs by colliery workers would amount to about Rs.1,000,000. ¹

"The consumption of drink, and particularly of spirituous liquors", observed the Royal Commission on Labour, "may be said to be a feature of the majority of industrial areas and has created considerable havoc in some of them." ² Although reluctant to indicate any national policy on the question of liquor traffic, the Commission nevertheless concluded that a reduction in the consumption of liquor would increase the welfare and efficiency of industrial workers, and recommended that all large cities and industrial areas should adopt a general policy of restricting the facilities for the sale of liquor by such means as reduction in the number of drink shops and restrictions on the hours of opening, which should in no case include any part of the forenoon, and, if possible, by the sale of spirituous liquors only in sealed bottles. ³

Since by far the largest number of Indian workers are migrants and leave some members of their family in their native places, remittances to absentee dependants are an item in many family budgets. The amount of remittance varies considerably, the

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 120-121.

² *Ibid.*, p. 222.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223.

highest percentage being 8.3 in the case of Telugu families in Rangoon. ¹

Expenditure on remittances is naturally much higher in the case of single men who have to maintain their families at home. The percentage expenditure on remittances was, for instance, 22.6 in the case of single persons as compared with 3.2 in the case of family budgets in Bombay in 1921-1922. The average monthly remittances by single men to their dependants varied from over one-fifth to one-third of the total income, as shown in the table below :

AVERAGE MONTHLY REMITTANCES BY SINGLE MEN TO DEPENDANTS ¹

Centre	Number of single persons' budgets	Remittances	
		Average monthly expenditure for all budgets	Percentage expenditure for all budgets
		Rs. a. p.	
Bombay (1921-1922), all industry	603	11 7 1	26.2
Rangoon (1926-1927), all industry			
Tamils	132	6 11 4	24.4
Telugus.	1,339	7 4 9	25.2
Uriyas	128	10 3 7	29.2
Hindustanis	768	8 10 0	33.2
Chittagonians.	654	9 0 3	30.7
Bombay (1930), textile.	68	7 3 4	22.68

¹ Compiled from reports on respective enquiries referred to above.

6. — Indebtedness

Very heavy expenditure is incurred by almost all classes of industrial workers in India on the payment of interest on debts, exclusive of the amounts which most of the workers owe for ordinary purchases in the course of the month. "The majority of industrial workers", says the Royal Commission on Labour, "are in debt for the great part of their working lives." ²

It is difficult to estimate the exact proportion of the workers

¹ The figures for Sholapur families are not available. The amount of remittance to the total income was 1.3 per cent. for Ahmedabad families, 3.2 per cent. for Bombay families and 1.5 per cent. for Tamil families in Rangoon.

² Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, p. 224.

who are in debt. According to the enquiries of the Bombay Labour Office, about 47 per cent. of the families in Bombay City (1921-1922) and 61 per cent. of the families in Sholapur were in debt. An analysis of the family budgets enquired into in 1930 shows that the proportion of the families which were in debt varied from 33 per cent. among the railway workers in Bengal to 90 per cent. among the cotton mill workers in the City of Bombay. ¹ In short, the proportion of the indebted families and individuals is probably not less than two-thirds of the whole in most industrial centres. ²

The amount of debt per family or person varied considerably, ranging from the earnings of a few days to more than sixteen times the monthly income in Bombay, ³ and from three months' pay to eighteen months' pay or over among the railway workers in the south. ⁴ More than half the families in Sholapur and about three-fourths of the families in Ahmedabad had debts amounting to more than three months' income. The average indebtedness of the family or person in industrial centres ranged from two-and-a-half to three months' earnings in Bihar and Orissa, and from three to over four months' earnings in the United Provinces. In general, the average debt would be equivalent to three months' earnings or more. ⁵

The causes of this heavy indebtedness are various. In many cases the son inherits the indebtedness of his father. But the most important cause of indebtedness is occasional expenditure on marriages, funerals, festivals and anniversaries. In Bombay in 1921-1922, the average expenditure on each marriage was Rs.214, on each funeral Rs.35, and on festivals and anniversaries Rs.18 per annum. Moreover, while in 73 per cent. of the families the expenditure on marriages was less than half the annual income, it was more than half the annual income in 23 per cent., and more than the annual family income in 4 per cent. ⁶ The proportion of indebtedness for expenditure on marriages was similarly high in other places, being 46 per cent. in Madras and 36 per cent. in

¹ *Labour Gazette*, January 1931, p. 481.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 224.

³ Refers to the 1930 Enquiry of the Bombay Labour Office; *Labour Gazette*, January 1931, p. 481.

⁴ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Evidence*, Vol. XI, p. 306.

⁵ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 224.

⁶ *Report on an Enquiry into Working Class Budgets in Bombay*, p. 34 ; see also footnote.

Cawnpore. Other causes of indebtedness are sickness and insufficient income, and more recently unemployment. Sickness was responsible, for instance, for 34 per cent. of indebtedness in Cawnpore ; insufficient income for 57 per cent. on the Southern Indian Railway, and unemployment for over 48 per cent. of the cases among Bombay textile workers in 1930. ¹

The burden of debt is aggravated by the excessive rates of interest which most of the workers have to pay. The rates of interest are determined by several factors, such as the amount and sources of loans, the period of time for which the loans are contracted and the system of security. Most of the workers borrow from private professional moneylenders (*banyas* and *kabulis*). In the case of small loans of a few rupees, the rate may be one or even two annas per rupee per month. Bigger loans for short periods such as a few weeks or months and on personal security also bear high rates of interest. In Coimbatore, for instance, the rate of interest was from 9 to 15 per cent. on money loaned against jewels, from 15 to 24 per cent. in the case of promissory notes and mortgages, and from 37½ to 150 per cent. in the case of short-term hand loans (without documents). ² As a rule, money borrowed from co-operative societies ³ is obtained at a much lower rate of interest.

Repayment of capital by the debtor is infrequent nor is it desired by the creditor, who prefers the prompt payment of interest. Default on interest payments, however, is a common occurrence, and each default goes to increase the liability, so that a loan of a small sum may lead to a permanent and heavy load of debt. ⁴ Interest payments are, therefore, a heavy burden on family expenditure, ranging for example from 2.77 per cent. of the total in Bombay (1921-1922) to 6.65 per cent. in Sholapur (1925). These payments can only be made by the sacrifice not only of petty luxuries but often of the primary necessities of life.

¹ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Evidence*, Vol. XI, pp. 15, 75 and 307 ; *Labour Gazette*, January 1931, p. 482. The information regarding Bombay workers refers to family budgets only.

² ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Evidence*, Vol. XI, p. 21.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 12. 25 per cent. of the indebted workers in the printing trade and 7.6 per cent. in the textile industry borrowed from co-operative societies in Madras.

⁴ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 226.

7. — Cost of Living

Finally, some reference must be made to the information available regarding changes in the cost of living. Comparable data on this subject exist only for the Bombay Presidency since 1926. In Bombay City the cost-of-living index, on the base of July 1926 (=100), was 72 in December 1933 and 71 in April 1934, showing a fall of 28 and 29 per cent. respectively; in Ahmedabad it was, on the base of August 1926 (=100), 69 in December 1933, or a fall of 31 per cent.; and in Sholapur it was, on the base of February 1927 (=100), 71 in December 1933 and 72 in February 1934, showing a fall of 29 and 28 per cent. respectively. ¹

On the basis of this information on the cost of living, estimates have been made of the changes in real wages in the case of cotton-mill workers in Bombay City, Ahmedabad and Sholapur. As compared with July 1926, the real wage index in Bombay City was 131 in February 1933 (that is, the month before the cuts in wages started), 115 in December 1933, and 111 in April 1934; as compared with August 1926, the real wage index in Ahmedabad was 154 in December 1933; and as compared with February 1927, the real wage index in Sholapur was 130 in December 1933 and 115 in February 1934. ²

In Rangoon, between March 1914 and March 1928, there was an increase of 40.14 per cent. in nominal wages. The index numbers of the cost of living for the four communities, namely, the Burmese, the Tamils, Telugus and Uriyas, the Hindustanis

Community	March 1914	March 1928
Burmese	92	134
Tamils } Telugus } Uriyas }	96	136
Hindustanis.	98	148
Chittagonians	93	136

¹ *Wages and Unemployment in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry, 1934*, p. 111.

² *Ibid.*, p. 112.

and the Chittagonians, as published in the *Burma Gazette*, are shown in the table above. An unweighted arithmetical mean of these figures would be 95 for 1914 and 138 for 1928, showing an increase of 45.26 per cent. in the cost of living, that is, an increase of 5.12 per cent. in real wages.¹

Index numbers showing the changes in the cost of living in the Bombay Presidency during the years 1929-1934, but relating to different base periods from the numbers mentioned above, are given in the table below. Similar cost-of-living index numbers are not available for other industrial centres, but as prices, to a greater or lesser degree and with a varying time-lag, move in a comparable manner in other parts of India, the index numbers for Bombay, Ahmedabad and Sholapur may give a rough idea of the trend in the cost of living in the country generally. The following table shows that, since 1929, the cost of living has fallen by over one-third in Bombay and over one-fourth in Ahmedabad and Sholapur.

COST-OF-LIVING INDEX NUMBERS IN THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY,
1929-1935¹

Year	Bombay : food, fuel and lighting, clothing and house rent (100 = July 1914)	Ahmedabad : food, fuel and lighting, clothing, miscellaneous and house rent (100 = year ending July 1927)	Sholapur : food, fuel and lighting, clothing, miscellaneous and house rent (100 = year ending January 1928)
1929 . . .	149	97	101
1930 . . .	137	87	92
1931 . . .	110	75	73
1932 . . .	109	76	73
1933 . . .	103	72	69
1934 . . .	97	71	72
1935 . . .	101	71	72

¹ Compiled from *Labour Gazette*, June 1937, p. 802.

¹ *Report on Wages in Rice Mills in Burma*, 1931, pp. 4 and 5.

CHAPTER X

HOUSING AND WELFARE

One of the most important and difficult questions of industrial labour in India is that of housing. It is the principal subject of this last chapter, which also deals with welfare work, another question of particular importance in the case of workers who need protection and assistance in such a high degree as do the industrial workers of India.

I. — Housing Conditions

The housing conditions of the majority of the industrial workers of India are deplorable. Organised industries have usually developed in or near large towns, although in some cases they have formed the nucleus of new cities. " Limitation of space and high land values are responsible for much of the congestion in the large cities, but these factors have had less influence in the smaller towns and centres. Probably the most important common feature has been the lack of control over the selection of sites intended for industrial development and the consequent additional overcrowding, caused by the presence of large numbers of immigrant workers seeking accommodation in the heart of towns already suffering from a shortage of houses. " ¹

SUPPLYING AGENCIES

The housing accommodation of workers in organised industries may be supplied by the employers, by public or semi-public bodies, by the workers themselves, by trade unions and co-opera-

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 270.

tive societies, or, and this is the most common case, by private landlords.

Some employers build houses for their workers or help them to build their own houses. Almost all plantation and mining workers are housed by their employers. A large number of factory workers are also housed by employers. By 1929-1930, for instance, 22 cotton-mill owners supplied housing to 20 per cent. of their workers in Bombay City, ¹ 53 jute-mill owners had built 41,000 houses for accommodating 131,000 or between 30 and 40 per cent. of their workers in Calcutta and the vicinity, and 35 cotton mills provided houses for 16 per cent. of their workers in Ahmedabad. ² Since that date, housing improvement has been continued in Bombay and Calcutta and the Ahmedabad Mill-owners' Federation has built 435 tenements. The Tata Iron and Steel Company have built 6,285 houses for their workers ³; about one-fourth of the factories in the United Provinces had built 5,400 single rooms and 1,045 double rooms by 1930 and added 2,035 single rooms and 736 double rooms in the course of the three years from 1931 to 1933 (1,889 in 1935-1936) ⁴; and 226 factories in Madras had provided housing accommodation for their workers by 1936. ⁵ By 1935, nearly 50 per cent. of the perennial factories in the Punjab had provided quarters for most of the permanent staff, and many of the larger mills aimed at accommodating all their workers. ⁶ Employers in other cities have also provided some housing for their workers.

The railways provide housing accommodation for a large number of railway servants. The general policy of the railways, as laid down by the Railway Board, has been to provide quarters free of rent for servants who, under ordinary circumstances of work, are liable to be called upon at any time without notice to attend to the business of the railways. Under this policy the staff employed on the maintenance of the permanent way, the

¹ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Memorandum from the Government of Bombay*, Bombay, 1929, p. 22.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 272 and 277.

³ THE TATA IRON AND STEEL CO. LTD. : *Report on the Conditions affecting the Labourers of the Jamshedpur Works*, 1937.

⁴ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Evidence*, Vol. III, Part I, p. 150 ; *Annual Reports on the Working of Indian Factories Act in the United Provinces*, 1931-1936.

⁵ *Report on the Working of the Indian Factories Act in the Madras Presidency for 1933*, p. 4 ; 1936, p. 2.

⁶ *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act for 1934 and 1935*.

majority of the station staff, running staff, colliery staff, medical staff and a considerable proportion of shed and carriage staff are provided with housing accommodation. Moreover, whenever private enterprise fails to meet the housing demands of railway servants, the railways provide quarters at a moderate rental. A considerable number of railway servants, for instance, are provided with housing at such towns as Mytinge and Insein (Burma) by the Burma Railway, at Bombay City by the B.B. and C.I. Railway, at Khargpur by the B.N. Railway, and at Golden Rock by the S.I. Railway. The staff employed on construction projects are housed in temporary quarters constructed for the purpose. The proportion of railway servants housed by the railways varied from 3 per cent. in the signal branch of the N.W. Railways to 93 per cent. in the traffic department of the B. and N.W. Railways by 1929. Capital expenditure by different railways on staff quarters, including schools, institutes and hospitals, etc., amounted to nearly 250 million rupees up to 1 April 1929, and the programme involved the spending of another 20 million rupees in the following two years.¹

The manner in which employers help their workers to build their own houses may be by a grant of land, the offer of building material free of cost, or an advance of money free of interest or at a reduced rate of interest. The method of granting land and building materials is the one generally adopted by plantation and mine managements; it is also sometimes adopted by factories. As instances of the advance of money by employers for the building of sanitary houses, the following may be cited: By 1929-1930, the Empress Cotton Mills at Nagpur had advanced Rs.70,000 for such purposes. The Tata Iron and Steel Company at Jamshedpur grants money at 3 per cent. interest for building *kachcha* (mud and wood) and *pucca* (brick) houses, the loan being repaid by monthly instalments in one year in the first case and in five years in the second case. Out of 13,200 houses available in Jamshedpur in March 1933, 60 per cent. were built and owned by workers, in almost all cases with the assistance of the Company. The total amount advanced by the Company since 31 March 1929 is Rs.440,653, of which Rs.363,394 was recovered and Rs.77,259

¹ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Evidence*, Vol. VIII, Part I, pp. 42-44 and 48.

outstanding on 31 March 1937.¹ On several railways the subordinate staff is allowed house-building advances amounting to twelve months' pay to enable them to build houses for themselves. This policy, however, does not benefit the staff in general to any large extent, owing to the fact that the service involves transfer from station to station on promotion, etc.²

The provision of housing accommodation by public and semi-public organisations has been most extensive in the City of Bombay. Since 1920 the Government of Bombay has built 207 *chawls* (tenement buildings), containing 16,206 tenements; of these tenements 8,730, or 52 per cent., were occupied by the end of 1932-1933.³ Between 1925 and 1929 the Bombay Improvement Trust built 99 *chawls*, containing 8,896 tenements. By the end of 1933 the Port Trust housed 3,446 out of 9,184, or over 37 per cent. of their workers. The Corporation of Bombay has recently built 550 semi-permanent dwellings to replace corrugated iron sheds, and proposes to build another 150.⁴

There are also cases where the workers themselves build their own houses without help from the employer. In Sholapur, for instance, about 5 per cent. of cotton-mill workers lived in their own houses in 1935. The workers of the Tata Iron and Steel Company had built 4,820 houses in Jamshedpur by the end of 1937.⁵ According to the enquiries into the standard of living of industrial workers, made in 1930, about one-half of the families in Coimbatore owned their houses, and a large number of the families in Nagpur, Jubbulpore, Akola and Gondia in the Central Provinces paid ground rent for plots on which they had built their own houses. In the railway workshops of Jamalpur, Lucknow and Lillooah most of the workers live in their own houses, either in the towns or in the neighbouring villages.⁶

Collective action by workers in providing housing has not yet been very extensive. The Labour Union in Ahmedabad, how-

¹ *The Times of India*, Bombay, 10 February 1931; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, 1931, p. 282; *Report on the Conditions affecting the Labourers of the Jamshedpur Works*, 1937.

² THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA: *Evidence*, Vol. VIII, Part I, p. 45.

³ *Labour Gazette*, October 1933, p. 109.

⁴ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA: *Memorandum from the Government of Bombay*, p. 24; BOMBAY PORT TRUST: *Administration Report*, 1933-1934, Appendix, p. XXIX. *Annual Factory Report*, Bombay Presidency, 1936, pp. 16-17.

⁵ THE TATA IRON AND STEEL CO. LTD.: *op cit.*, 1937, p. 42.

⁶ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA: *Evidence*, Vol. XI, p. 269.

ever, has recently undertaken a scheme of building workmen's houses, and house-building has been begun by co-operative societies such as the Vankar Co-operative Society at Priyatambur in Ahmedabad ; though both these ventures are still limited in scope they had built 80 tenements for tenant ownership by 1935.¹

By far the largest number of industrial workers live in dwellings rented from private landlords. These dwellings may be either huts or *chawls*, and are usually in the vicinity of the factories. An enquiry into the ownership of a certain number of workers' dwellings in 1930 showed that of 189 houses in Coimbatore over one-half, of 129 houses in Madras about three-fourths, and of 729 houses in Cawnpore over nine-tenths were owned by landlords.

NATURE OF ACCOMMODATION

The various types of housing accommodation may be briefly described as follows : (1) *lines*, or houses built in rows — this is the most usual type of housing provided by employers and is found in almost all industrial centres, including plantations, mining areas and factory towns ; (2) *bustles*, or clusters of small dwellings — these are found on some plantations, in mining districts, and even in urban areas ; (3) *chawls*, which are generally two to three-storey buildings — they are found in towns such as Bombay and Ahmedabad, which are congested and where the price of land is very high ; (4) *cheries*, which are merely shelters put up on private land in Madras ; (5) model villages, built either by employers or by public and semi-public bodies.

As the largest employers of labour, the railways have developed a more or less definite housing policy. Until recently the railway quarters were of two distinct types, adapted respectively for occupation by Europeans and Anglo-Indians and for occupation by Indians. Latterly there has been a change of policy on the part of some of the railways, which have begun to adopt designs for quarters suited to Europeans and Indians alike, and to allot the quarters to the staff according to grade and pay. The standard of accommodation provided by the railways for their servants differs slightly on different railways, but the following specifications appear to be typical : (1) for *unskilled labourers*

¹ *Statistics of Factories subject to the Indian Factories Act, 1935, p. 5.*

— one room of about 90 to 100 square feet in area, a verandah of about 40 to 50 square feet, and a courtyard of about 100 to 120 square feet ; (2) for *skilled artisans* — two rooms of a total area of 190 to 220 square feet, and a verandah of about 40 to 50 square feet ; (3) for *junior subordinates* — two rooms of a total area of 250 to 270 square feet, a verandah of 100 to 120 square feet, a kitchen of about 25 square feet, a bathroom of about 25 square feet and a courtyard of 225 to 350 square feet ; and (4) for *junior Europeans and Anglo-Indian subordinates* — two rooms, kitchen, bathroom, pantry or dressing-room, verandah, and servants' quarters.¹

Model villages or settlements have been built by private industrial undertakings in Nagpur, Madras, Cawnpore, Jamshedpur and Ahmedabad. In Nagpur the Empress Cotton Mills have received from the Government on favourable terms an area of 200 acres of land, which has been parcelled out into small plots of 53 feet by 56 feet. One-third of a plot may be utilised for building a house, the money for which can be obtained on loan, and the worker becomes the owner after repayment of the loan. The total number of houses and quarters in the settlement in 1934 was 853, all of which were occupied.² The Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras have built three villages with 459 houses, and another village of 200 houses is building ; the houses generally consist of a living-room, a kitchen, a washing place, and a front verandah and yard. In 1930 the British India Corporation in Cawnpore had provided housing for about 83 to 90 per cent of its workers in three settlements ; one of these settlements contained 676 single quarters, 140 double quarters and 12 bungalow cottages within an area of 26 acres, and included among its amenities paved courtyards, shady trees and a central water supply. By 1936, the Corporation had provided 1,655 quarters in its settlements.³

One of the most considerable housing schemes adopted by employers is that of the Tata Iron and Steel Company. For the development of the town of Jamshedpur, the creation of which

¹ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Evidence*, Vol. VIII, Part I, pp. 45-47.

² From a report by the superintendent of the settlement.

³ *The Times of India*, Bombay, 10 February 1930 ; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 275 and 276 ; *Welfare Work of the British India Corporation, Ltd.*, 1930, pp. 1-16 ; *Annual Report on the Working of the Factories Act in the United Provinces*, 1936, pp. 16-17.

was a direct result of the establishment of the Company's work in an area that was previously jungle, the Company in 1918 adopted a town planning scheme. Under this scheme, housing was to be provided for some 70,000 persons, the number of families per acre being restricted to twelve; open spaces and playgrounds were also provided. A feature of the housing scheme was the hexagonal grouping of the houses, each group being intended to accommodate, as far as possible, people of the same caste and coming from the same part of the country. The houses are constructed either by the Company or by the workers, to whom the Company grants building loans. Since 1928 it has allotted Rs.3,800,000 for town capital expenditure, of which Rs.2,100,000 have been devoted to housing. By March 1933 the total number of houses available in Jamshedpur was 13,200, of which 40 per cent. were owned by the Company. The total capital expenditure of the Company on housing up to 31 March 1937 was about eleven million rupees.¹

In 1933 the Mill Owners' Association in Ahmedabad drew up a programme for building 1,000 tenements in three years; of 435 tenements completed, 304 were occupied by the end of 1935. The type of building is a series of blocks of eight or fewer tenements, arranged in a rectangle with an open space in the centre; each block of houses has a common verandah and each tenement consists of a living-room and a kitchen.²

The housing scheme of the Ahmedabad Labour Union consists in the building of 64 dwellings on the bank of the Sabarmati. The dwellings, which may be acquired by the occupiers on the hire-purchase system, are built in rows; each dwelling comprises two rooms, a kitchen, a verandah and a yard at the back.³ The dwellings built by the Vankar Co-operative Society in Ahmedabad consist of two rooms, a kitchen and a front and a side verandah.⁴

The dwelling accommodation ordinarily available for Indian workers is of many different kinds. On most plantations, individual houses are made of mud and plaster, with thatched roofs, but the lines are usually substantial structures with brick walls

¹ *Report of the Indian Tariff Board on the Iron and Steel Industry*, Delhi, 1934, Chapter VIII; THE TATA IRON AND STEEL CO. LTD., *op. cit.*, p. 41.

² *Labour Gazette*, May 1935, p. 679; June 1935, pp. 776-777.

³ *Ibid.*, February 1933, pp. 428-429.

⁴ *Ibid.*, June 1933, pp. 769-770.

and corrugated iron roofs. In coalfields the houses are generally built of brick and cement as in Jharia ; in some cases they have tiled roofs, e.g. in Raniganj. In other mining and quarrying areas the dwellings vary from stone-built houses to huts with matting walls and thatched roofs. As regards the housing of factory workers, it may be mentioned that in Cawnpore the majority of the dwellings are huts of unbaked brick and clay, roofed with country tiles, flat and cylindrical alternating ; about 70 per cent. of the families live in such huts.¹ In large towns such as Bombay and Calcutta, however, the workers are generally housed in *chawls* or lines which are generally brick buildings, sometimes roofed with corrugated iron.²

HOUSE RENT

The housing provided by employers for their own workers is frequently rent-free or at a nominal rent. The supply of free accommodation to workers is a definite policy with those industries which suffer from labour shortage, e.g. plantations and mines. Some factories also find it convenient to have a body of trained or experienced workers at hand and supply quarters rent-free or at a nominal rent. The rent in some cases covers only the interest charges ; the Tata Iron and Steel Company, for instance, calculates rent as far as possible at 4 per cent. of the capital outlay.³

The general policy of the railways in the past has been to grant free quarters to certain classes of railway servants, including particularly the lower-paid staff. If no housing is available for workers who are entitled to free quarters, house rent allowances are granted in lieu of quarters. These allowances may be fixed at 10 per cent. of pay or a little higher in the case of lower-grade servants, or may be equal to the actual rent paid, whichever is less ; in some cases they may amount to 15 or 20 per cent. of pay if the prevailing rent is high. Railway servants in the higher wage classes are required to pay rent which is assessed on the basis of pay, and varies from 3 to 10 per cent. of pay ; the rent may include an additional percentage representing the average

¹ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Evidence*, Vol. XI, p. 75.

² ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Memorandum from the Government of Bombay*, 1929, p. 26.

³ THE TATA IRON AND STEEL CO. LTD. : *Welfare Report*, 1929-1933, p. 24.

overtime and mileage allowances earned in the case of running staff.¹

Recently, however, the Railway Board has revised the policy hitherto adopted in regard to the grant of free quarters and the assessment of rent in respect of workers on State-managed railways. Under this revised policy all future entrants, except the lower-paid staff, will pay rent up to a maximum of 10 per cent. of pay, i.e. at a rate calculated to yield not less than 4 per cent. per annum on the capital cost of each class of housing, excluding the cost of land.

Statistics showing the rents paid by working-class families in Bombay, Sholapur and Ahmedabad are available for the year 1932 in the case of Bombay² and the years 1925 and 1926 respectively in the case of Sholapur and Ahmedabad. The figures are not, therefore, strictly comparable, but it seems unlikely that rents have undergone any appreciable change since 1925-1926. It will be seen from the following table that about two-thirds of the families paid a monthly rent of less than Rs.3 in Sholapur, between Rs.3 and Rs.6. in Ahmedabad, and between Rs.5 and Rs.8 in Bombay.

MONTHLY RENTS PAID BY WORKING-CLASS FAMILIES
IN SHOLAPUR, AHMEDABAD AND BOMBAY

Monthly rents	Sholapur (1925) ¹		Ahmedabad (1926) ²		Bombay (1932) ³	
	Number of families	Percentage of total	Number of families	Percentage of total	Number of families	Percentage of total
Below Rs.2	304	33.70	48	5.51	13	0.91
Rs.2 and below Rs.3 . .	280	31.04	76	8.72	26	1.82
Rs.3 " " 4	218	24.17	160	18.35	96	6.70
Rs.4 " " 5	76	8.43	223	25.57	207	14.45
Rs.5 " " 6	10	1.11	191	21.90	434	30.31
Rs.6 " " 7	11	1.22	82	9.40	117	8.17
Rs.7 " " 8	2	0.22	29	3.33	271	18.92
Rs.8 " " 9	1	0.11	28	3.21	131	9.15
Rs.9 and over	—	—	35	4.01	137	9.57
Total	902	100.00	872	100.00	1,432	100.00

¹ Report on an Enquiry into Family Budgets of Cotton Workers in Sholapur City, 1928, p. 21.

² Report on an Enquiry into Working-Class Family Budgets in Ahmedabad, 1928, p. 20.

³ Labour Gazette, April 1933, pp. 602-604.

¹ THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : Evidence, Vol. VIII, Part I, pp. 48-51.

² A special enquiry into the rents paid by the working class in

Some information is also available showing the variations in rent according to the number of rooms occupied by a family. The following table indicates that, as compared with the rent of a single-roomed tenement, the average rent for a two-roomed tenement is about one-fourth as much again in Sholapur, one-third as much in Ahmedabad and three-fourths as much in Bombay.

VARIATIONS IN RENT ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF ROOMS OCCUPIED BY A FAMILY IN SHOLAPUR, AHMEDABAD AND BOMBAY

Tenements with	Sholapur 1925 ¹		Ahmedabad 1926 ²		Bombay 1930 ³	
	Number of tenements	Average monthly rent	Number of tenements	Average monthly rent	Number of tenements	Average monthly rent
		Rs. a. p.		Rs. a. p.		Rs. a. p.
One room	297	1 15 8	636	2 1 10	71	5 4 9
Two rooms	437	2 6 10	156	5 9 6	8	9 1 9
Three rooms	95	3 10 8	39	6 15 5	1	15 0 0
Four rooms or more	29	3 10 3	22	10 9 10	—	—
All tenements . .	858	2 7 5	853	4 10 11	80	5 12 9

¹ Compiled from *Report on an Enquiry into Family Budgets of Cotton-Mill Workers in Sholapur City, 1929*, p. 22. Of the 902 families covered by the enquiry 44 were living in huts; they are excluded from the above figures.

² *A Report on an Enquiry into Working-Class Family Budgets in Ahmedabad, 1928*, p. 19. Excluding 16 huts and 3 imperfectly specified tenements out of a total of 872 family budgets.

³ *Labour Gazette*, January 1931, p. 418.

SANITATION AND OVERCROWDING

The sanitary condition of Indian working-class dwellings varies with the type of housing. In some up-to-date lines and in model villages there are good roads, surface drainage, septic tanks, and an adequate supply of drinking water from municipal water works or deep tube wells; the houses are constructed under the control of the municipal authorities or of a health board, and there is sufficient provision for space, light and air.

Railway settlements enjoy a high reputation for adequate sanitary arrangements. The problem of sanitation receives continuous attention by the supervisory medical officers and, in some centres, of sanitation committees. The sites selected for building

Bombay City was undertaken by the Bombay Labour Office at the instance of the Bombay Provincial Franchise Committee in 1932. The period covered by the enquiry was from the third week of January to the middle of May 1932.

quarters are well drained, are free from vegetation and are situated in healthy localities. Proper arrangements are made for the supply of pure drinking water, and sanitary squads operate at all large stations, while "sweepers" are provided at small stations.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Labour, the Government of India has taken steps to ensure that, in all cases where a large amount of labour is to be employed on public works, the public health and medical authorities are invariably consulted in regard to housing and sanitary arrangements and the provision of medical facilities, and that these authorities inspect such arrangements from time to time. ¹

Most of the dwellings available for workers in industrial towns, however, and especially those rented by private landlords, leave almost everything to be desired in regard to sanitary arrangements. Usually the lines and *bustees* have been built in a haphazard manner, rather than laid out or planned; the houses are built close to one another without sufficient space being left for streets or roads, the only approach to them being winding lanes; in most *bustees* there is no provision for light and air, the only opening being a low door — in Cawnpore, for instance, 82.5 per cent. of the dwellings enquired into had no windows. No proper provision exists for the supply of water or for drainage.

As regards water, municipal hydrants or wells sunk by landlords in their *bustees* are the principal sources of supply in large cities like Cawnpore. Some dwellings have their own water taps, and the river is used by workers living near the banks. Of the 729 families enquired into in 1930, 31.3 per cent. used municipal hydrants, 52.7 per cent. the common wells, and 16 per cent. private taps provided by landlords. In Bombay the water supply appears to be more satisfactory in the new buildings than in the old. In the case of new tenements, one tap was provided for less than 8 tenements in about 56 per cent. of the cases, for 9 to 15 tenements in 33 per cent. of the cases, and for over 15 tenements in 11 per cent. of the cases; the corresponding percentages for old tenements were 11, 44 and 44 respectively. In the case of 46 old tenements and one new tenement, no water taps were provided. ²

As examples of latrine accommodation, it may be noted that in most of the Bombay *chawls* there is one latrine for 8 tenements,

¹ Orders to this effect were issued in February 1932. Cf. GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Fifth Report, etc.*, 1936, p. 13.

² *Labour Gazette*, May 1931, p. 893.

while in Cawnpore, of the 729 families included in the enquiry, 64.7 per cent. used public latrines, 28 per cent. private latrines, and 7.3 per cent. the streets or any other available space such as fields or ruins. Arrangements for disposal of refuse and for cleaning the surroundings of workers' dwellings are usually defective. The report of the Royal Commission on Labour says of housing in urban and industrial areas : " Neglect of sanitation is often evidenced by heaps of rotting garbage and pools of sewage, whilst the absence of latrines enhances the general pollution of air and soil. " ¹

The effects of the lack of sanitation are aggravated by overcrowding in most of the tenements in larger industrial centres. Large numbers of tenements have only one room ; the proportion of families living in single rooms was 97 per cent. in 1921-1922 ² and 89 per cent. in 1930 in Bombay, 73 per cent. in Ahmedabad in 1926, ³ 72 per cent. in Cawnpore, and 60 per cent. in Nagpur, Jubbulpore, Akola and Gondia in 1930. ⁴ The average number of persons per tenement was 4.6 in Sholapur, 3.87 in Ahmedabad and 3.88 in Bombay (1921-1922). The approximate average floor space per person was respectively 37, 47.67 and 35.16 square feet. An enquiry into 5,363 tenements in Bombay in 1930 showed that about three-fourths housed more than 2 persons, over two-fifths from 3 to 4 persons, and over one-third 6 persons or more. A single room was occupied by 6 or more persons in 591 cases. ⁵ It must be pointed out that in most cases the occupants do not sleep inside during the hot weather and that cooking is often done on the porch of single-storeyed tenements.

One of the causes of overcrowding is subletting, a common practice in the case of a considerable number of families. Some workers resent paying rent, as they have not been accustomed to pay rent in their native villages, and they therefore seek to raise the amount by subletting ; in other cases the workers are not in a position to pay the rent without taking lodgers ; in some other

¹ Cf. ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Evidence*, Vol. XI, pp. 75-76 ; *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 271-277 ; *Labour Gazette*, May 1931, pp. 890-896.

² *Report on Enquiry into Working-Class Budgets in Bombay*, 1923, p. 23.

³ *Report on an Enquiry into Working-Class Budgets in Ahmedabad*, 1928, p. 19.

⁴ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Evidence*, Vol. XI, pp. 75 and 199.

⁵ Compiled from *Labour Gazette*, May 1931, p. 890.

instances, the profit motive is the determining factor.¹ Among the Bombay families mentioned above, about 20 per cent. rented space in their tenements to other persons varying in number from 1 to 12, and including both single persons and other families.²

One of the results of insanitary and overcrowded housing conditions is the high rate of infant mortality, the relation of which to the amount of housing accommodation in tenements in Bombay City is shown in the table below. The rate of infant mortality, in the case of families occupying one room, was more than double that of families occupying two rooms or more. Although the presence of malaria and the practice of soothing babies by the administration of opium are also partly responsible, the main cause of the high rate of infant mortality is overcrowding.³

INFANT MORTALITY IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER
OF ROOMS OCCUPIED, BOMBAY CITY, 1926-1927¹

Number of rooms	Births		Deaths of infants		Infant mortality per 1,000 births registered ²	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
1 room and under	41,615	53.6	5,688	83.0	1927	1926
2 rooms	1,736	8.0	352	5.1	490	577
3 rooms	392	1.8	487	1.3	203	254
4 or more rooms	174	0.8	34	0.5	222	215
Hospitals	7,764	35.8	680	9.9	195	163
Homeless and not recorded	4	—	16	0.2	88	107
Total	21,685	100.0	6,857	100.0	316	389

¹ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Memorandum from the Government of Bombay*, 1929, p. 37.

² The figures of infant mortality are inflated by the fact that many women return to their villages for their confinement and then return; the births are thus not registered, but the deaths are registered.

The absence of adequate housing accommodation is also one

¹ ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Memorandum from the Government of Bombay*, p. 32.

² *Labour Gazette*, May 1931, pp. 888-889.

³ This is the opinion of Major Cobell, Special Malaria Officer of the Government of Bombay. ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Memorandum from the Government of Bombay*, 1929, p. 37.

of the factors which predispose workers to leave their wives and children in the villages when they migrate to industrial centres. The result of this practice is seen in the great disparity between the numbers of the sexes in large towns. The number of women per 1,000 men in 1931 was 489 in Calcutta, 554 in Bombay, 696 in Cawnpore and 853 in Ahmedabad.¹

For the improvement of the housing conditions of industrial workers in India the Royal Commission on Labour made a large number of recommendations relating to such matters as the survey, layout and development of urban and industrial areas, the establishment of minimum standards with regard to floor and cubic space, ventilation and lighting, water supply, drainage and latrines and type-plans of working-class houses, the grant by Government of subsidies to employers for undertaking housing schemes, and the encouragement of co-operative building societies.² The principal measures so far taken by the Government of India to implement these recommendations is the amendment of the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 for the purpose of creating facilities for employers to acquire land for housing accommodation and sanitary improvement; action upon most of the recommendations depends upon Local Governments, which have accepted some, rejected others, and postponed the further consideration of some suggestions until the financial situation is more favourable.

2. — Welfare Work

The term "welfare" is used in India to cover a large number of activities and institutions for promoting the well-being of the workers. Some of these activities and institutions are prescribed by law, but in most cases they are due to the initiative of public and semi-public bodies, employers and private organisations. Among their more important objects are the supply of decent housing, the improvement of public health, the protection of maternity and childhood, and the provision of education and recreation. Some phases of "welfare work" have been incidentally mentioned in previous chapters; reference will be made in the present section to various other aspects of welfare activities.

¹ *Census of India, 1931*, p. 50.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 285-294.

GENERAL WELFARE ACTIVITIES

There has been considerable development of welfare work on the part of employers in recent years, and particularly in the case of large industrial undertakings, such as the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras, the British India Corporation in Cawnpore, the Empress Mills in Nagpur, the Spinning and Weaving Mills in Shelapur, the Tata Iron and Steel Company at Jamshedpur, and the Sassoon group of mills in Bombay, the Indian Iron and Steel Company of Burnpur (Bengal) and the Burma Oil Company in Burma. The range and nature of employers' welfare activities may be best illustrated by a short summary of the social work of some of these concerns.

The welfare work organised by the British India Corporation is carried out by a trained and salaried staff; it consists mainly in measures for the improvement of sanitation, comfort and safety, and the provision of crèches, suitable dwellings and model villages, the latter being equipped with dispensaries, maternity and child welfare centres, day and night schools for boys and girls, playgrounds, athletic and dramatic clubs, libraries and reading-rooms.¹ The Buckingham and Carnatic Mills have made provision for education, the dispensing of medicines and medical attention, and have established model villages, workmen's stores, an athletic association, a dramatic society and a debating club.² The Tata Iron and Steel Company's welfare work covers the organisation of safety measures and first aid, women's rest-houses, maternity benefits, provident fund contributions, medical relief, education, housing, building loans, and sports and games; the expenditure on the inside and outside welfare activities of the Company amounted to over Rs.7.37 million and Rs.1.99 million respectively in the three years 1931-1933.³

Among the semi-public and public organisations, the most important work has been done by the Port Trusts and the municipalities, especially that of Bombay, which have undertaken specific work such as maternity and infant welfare; to these must also be added the railways, both State managed and com-

¹ *The Welfare Work of the British India Corporation, 1930.*

² *THE BUCKINGHAM AND CARNATIC MILLS: Fifteenth Annual Report of the Welfare Committee, 1936, p. 15.*

³ *THE TATA IRON AND STEEL CO. LTD.: Welfare Report, 1929-1933, p. 16; op. cit., 1937, pp. 38-39 and 70-86.*

pany managed, which have undertaken housing, sanitation, education, recreation and other welfare work.

Private organisations for social welfare work are comparatively few in number. The most important are the Social Service League, the Young Men's Christian Association, the Bombay Presidency Infant Welfare Society and the Seva Sadan Organisation. The Social Service League was organised in Bombay about a quarter of a century ago, and has at present seven centres, including the head office at the Servants of India Society's Home ; its work consists of the following branches : (1) Education, including day and night schools, training classes for social work, textile schools, sewing and cutting classes and drawing and pen-painting classes for women, permanent and travelling libraries and reading-rooms ; (2) medical help, including free dispensaries for women and children, first aid, home nursing and sanitation work in workers' quarters ; (3) recreation, including Indian gymnasia, *lati* clubs and dramatic performances ; (4) the management of an industrial settlement for the people of criminal tribes at Belgaum ; and (5) publicity work, e.g. the *Social Service Quarterly* and other periodical and occasional publications. ¹

Welfare work is also carried on by some workers' organisations, the most notable examples being some of the Postal Unions in different parts of the Bombay Presidency, the railwaymen's unions, and the Ahmedabad Labour Union. Some of the railwaymen's unions have organised co-operative societies and various kinds of funds for the provision of specific benefits such as legal defence, death and retirement benefits, unemployment and sickness benefits, the All-India Railwaymen's benefit fund and life insurance. ² The welfare work of the Ahmedabad Labour Union is carried out by different committees, which are respectively responsible for running hospitals for both indoor and outdoor patients, schools for boys and girls, shops for the sale of grain at low prices to members, restaurants for the provision of good food at cheap prices and in clean surroundings, and physical culture centres. ³

As regards the various forms of welfare activities, it may be

¹ THE SOCIAL SERVICE LEAGUE, Bombay : *22nd Annual Report*, 1933, Servants of India Society's Home, Bombay, 1934, pp. 1-28.

² ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR IN INDIA : *Memorandum from the Government of Bombay*, pp. 55 and 70.

³ THE TEXTILE LABOUR ASSOCIATION, Ahmedabad : *Annual Report*, 1930, pp. 1-35.

noted that increasing attention is being given to such recreational facilities as sports and games, cinemas and theatres, homes and clubs. Among the sports and games in vogue are football, cricket, tennis, hockey, billiards, basket-ball, wrestling, jumping, running, cards, chess, etc., provision for which is made by employers, athletic and other associations, and such organisations as the Y.M.C.A. and the Social Service League. In some industrial centres, e.g. Jamshedpur, women now take part in outdoor sports. Cinemas have become very popular among the working classes in all large towns and even in out-of-the-way places, e.g. plantations in the Surma Valley in Assam, the employers sometimes hiring touring cinemas for their workers. In some places workers form dramatic clubs and give periodical performances to their colleagues as well as to outsiders.

An urgent need of industrial workers in India is a place where they can meet their fellow workers or can find a home in case of necessity. Some of the welfare centres, especially those organised by trade unions and social service organisations, provide reading-rooms and clubs, where workers can spend their leisure hours. One of the most necessary and extensive institutions of this kind is the Indian Seamen's Home at Bombay, which was built at a cost of Rs.269,000 and began working in February 1932. The Home contains a reading-room and a store-room for seamen's surplus kit. In cases of sickness, the patients may be treated by honorary medical officers. There is a night school where English, Gujrathi, Urdu and Arabic are taught, and arrangements are made for lectures. Moreover, good food is supplied at rates considerably below those of the local eating-houses.¹

In order to assist workers in reducing or avoiding the heavy indebtedness which is one of the most burdensome features of industrial life in India, some employers help their workers to organise co-operative credit societies. As examples may be mentioned the co-operative credit society organised by the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras and the societies promoted by the cotton mills belonging to E. D. Sassoon & Co. Ltd. of Bombay. In February 1937 the former society had 2,171 members with 11,847 shares, and a paid-up share capital of Rs.58,600 ; the number and amount of loans to members amounted to 1,156 and Rs.116,185 respectively, bringing a net income of Rs. 16,339 to

¹ INDIAN SAILORS' HOME : *Annual Report, 1933*, Bombay, pp. 1-12.

the society in the year.¹ In the eleven cotton mills of the Sassoon group there were, in 1935, 28 workers' co-operative societies with a total membership of 6,628 and a working capital of Rs.279,722. These societies have a two-fold function, the granting of short loans and debt redemption. The outside debts of the members are carefully enquired into and the debts are settled at much smaller sums than are actually due under the promissory notes; many workers have thus been already released from the clutches of the moneylender. The budgets of the societies are audited by Government officers.²

Another important activity which is partly of a "welfare" character is the running of workmen's stores. Reference has already been made to the popularity of grain shops maintained by some employers in different industrial centres. In the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, for instance, these grain shops have developed into workmen's stores, which were opened in 1922 with the "object of providing the necessities of life to the workpeople at the cheapest possible rates".³ The stores are managed by a committee consisting of representatives of the management and of the workpeople. The success of these stores is indicated by the fact that the monthly sales in 1936 ranged between Rs.79,075 and Rs.90,658.⁴

Among other forms of welfare work, mention should be made of restaurants and canteens. As already mentioned, the Ahmedabad Labour Union has successfully maintained restaurants for the workers in some mills. Since March 1935 attempts have been made by the Sassoon group of cotton mills, in Bombay to run canteens. There is a canteen committee in each mill composed of the heads of the departments of the mill and workers' representatives. These canteens supply fresh and wholesome food-stuffs, drinks, etc., at moderate rates, and tea and refreshments are served to the operatives at their machines.

The above and similar activities have undoubtedly done much for the welfare of the workers, but the range of welfare work is still very restricted and the benefits of such work do not

¹ THE BUCKINGHAM AND CARNATIC MILLS, Madras: *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Welfare Committee*, 1936, pp. 13-14.

² From a written report of Mr. U. A. Moses, the Welfare Officer of the Company; *Annual Factory Report*, Bombay Presidency, 1936, p. 18.

³ *The Buckingham and Carnatic Mills and their Welfare Organisation*, 1932, Binny & Co. (Madras) Ltd., Managing Agents, p. 34.

⁴ THE BUCKINGHAM AND CARNATIC MILLS, Madras: *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Welfare Committee*, 1936, p. 13.

yet reach more than a fraction of the working population of the country. The work being done nevertheless shows what can be done by public institutions, employers, social service organisations and the workers themselves to improve the conditions of life and labour of Indian workers.

MATERNITY AND INFANT WELFARE

This short survey of welfare activities in India would, however, be incomplete without a special mention of the work that is being done for the protection of maternity and infancy in the form of measures for the improvement of the general health of women and the provision of better sanitary conditions and medical help for mothers and their infants.

Reference has already been made to the extension of medical services organised by employers in most industries for the supply of medicines and medical assistance to their workers free of cost. In a few cases this service is extended to the dependants and relatives of the workers, although a charge is often made for service to non-employed persons. Medical assistance to women, whether employed persons or dependants, is, however, handicapped by the reluctance of women to consult men doctors and the scarcity of women doctors.

This problem was considered by the Royal Commission on Labour, which recommended that women should be appointed to public health staffs, particularly in the more industrialised provinces, and that every hospital of any size should have a woman doctor on its staff, who should be in charge of all work connected with the health and welfare of women and children. In the larger cotton and jute areas, mills and factories should organise in groups, each establishment having its own welfare centre and health visitor under the supervision of a woman doctor employed by the group. In the larger industrial areas Government, local authorities and industrial managements should co-operate in the development of child welfare centres and women's clinics, and Government should give percentage grants for approved schemes.¹ These recommendations have been submitted to Provincial Governments and some action has already been taken ; in some other cases further consideration has been postponed until the

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, pp. 261-262.

new Constitution is in force or in consequence of financial stringency.¹

Maternity and infant welfare work has a considerable part in the welfare activities of industrial undertakings. On the plantations it takes various forms : on some tea gardens, two meals a day are supplied free to all children under 5 and 6 years of age ; on other gardens mothers and their infants are supplied with blankets free of charge and, if difficulty arises in obtaining milk, free issues are made ; again, a group of gardens in Assam has adopted the practice of weighing infants regularly ; finally, it is a general practice to make an annual house-to-house health survey.² For the improvement of the existing organisation on plantations, the Royal Commission on Labour made detailed recommendations similar, *mutatis mutandis*, to those mentioned above.

As regards work in other industries it may be mentioned that the Jharia Mines Board of Health appointed in 1930 a maternity supervisor, who supervises the work of midwives employed on a group of collieries in the centre of the coalfield, that the Asansol Mines Board of Health maintains a staff of six health visitors for maternity and infant welfare work and also four infant welfare centres situated near important groups of collieries, and that several industrial undertakings have organised systems of maternity and infant welfare work, e.g. the Empress Mills in Nagpur, the Tata Iron and Steel Mills in Jamshedpur, and the Howrah Mills Company in Howrah.

An important step was taken by the Indian Jute Mills Association in 1932, when they appointed a lady doctor to report on the feasibility of introducing crèches and other social welfare institutions in jute mills. In the report, which was submitted in the same year, the following recommendations were made : (a) the establishment of a welfare centre and crèche at individual mills, each centre and crèche to be in charge of a vernacular-speaking health visitor, with an *ayah* (nurse) to assist her ; (b) the employment of four trained and experienced health or welfare lady supervisors, whose duties would include visiting in turn each of the centres and crèches in their charge, and the supervision of the work of the health visitors ; (c) the employment of two lady doctors, who would have their headquarters on different

¹ GOVERNMENT OF INDIA : *Fourth Report*, 1935, pp. 132-137.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 413.

sides of the river, each² of whom would be in charge of a cottage hospital containing six beds for women workers — in addition to their hospital duties, they would establish consulting-rooms at suitable places, and would be available for any urgent or difficult cases in which help or advice was required ; (d) the employment of a lady doctor to supervise and administer the entire scheme. These recommendations have not yet been implemented for economic reasons, but improvements have been made in a number of directions in individual mills. ¹

Extensive work on maternity and infant welfare is carried out by the Bombay Presidency Infant Welfare Society. This Society began working in 1911, and has at present seven welfare centres, including three maternity homes, the latter being founded at Wadi Bundar in 1928, at Worli in 1931, and at De Lisle Road in 1932. The work of the Society includes ante-natal care, maternity care, care of babies, etc. All the centres and maternity homes are under the care of qualified nurses or doctors. ²

An urgently needed form of welfare work is the provision of crèches for infants, to which reference has already been made in connection with safety arrangements in factories. Crèches have, however, an important part to play in promoting the health of the children. It was a common practice among working women in Bombay to administer opium to their children when they went to work. An investigation undertaken by the Government in 1922 showed that 98 per cent. of the infants born to working women in Bombay had opium administered to them. This practice has since much diminished, but crèches have a part to play in promoting its complete disappearance. ³

Although the value of crèches was being increasingly realised, the number of mills which had provided crèches in 1927 was only 13 in Bombay, 16 in Ahmedabad, and 3 in Sholapur. Outside the Bombay Presidency there were only a few industrial undertakings, such as those in Madras and Nagpur, which had

¹ *Annual Report on the Administration of the Indian Factories Act in Bengal*, 1932, p. 9 ; 1936, pp. 13-14.

² In 1933 the total number of attendances of expectant mothers at ante-natal clinics was 18,171, of visits to expectant mothers 44,412, and of attendances of babies for milk and medicine 354,306. *Thirteenth Annual Report of the Bombay Presidency Infant Welfare Society for 1933*, Girgaum, Bombay, 1934, pp. 4 and 10.

³ T. J. CAMA and T. W. JOHNSTONE : *Crèches in Factories*, Bombay, 1931, p. 1 ; *Annual Factory Report*, Bombay Presidency, 1938, p. 17.

established crèches ; they were practically unknown in the jute mills of Calcutta and most of the other important centres.¹ As a result of the efforts made by the lady inspector and certifying surgeon, the Bombay Presidency has now made some progress in the installation of crèches in factories, as shown in the table below. It will be seen that, at the end of 1933, there were 104 crèches in the Presidency of Bombay, all of which, except 12, were in fair, good or excellent condition. About two-thirds of the crèches were located in Ahmedabad alone. It will also be seen that 2,843 infants daily received care and attention in a varying degree. A few more crèches have since been established in Bombay and Ahmedabad. The increasing popularity of the crèches in Bombay is indicated by the rise of the average daily attendance from 416 in 1933 to 520 in 1936.²

CRÈCHES IN FACTORIES IN THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY, 1933¹

Centre	Crèche classification					Average daily attendance
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	
Ahmedabad . . .	6	20	32	6	64	1,789
Bombay	8	13	1	—	22	416
Sholapur	2	4	—	1	7	424
Others	1	3	2	5	11	214
Total	17	40	35	12	104	2,843

¹ Annual Factory Report of the Presidency of Bombay, 1933.

The care received by infants in the crèches varies from factory to factory. The general routine of the crèche may, however, be described in the following terms: the mothers bring their infants with them in the early morning and leave them in charge of the *ayah* (nurse). The nursing infants are first bathed, dressed in clean clothes and put to sleep in the cradles. The nursing mothers are given leave from their work and visit the crèche at about 9 a.m., during the mid-day recess hour, and at about 3 p.m. Older children are later bathed, dressed in clean clothes, and given milk and biscuits ; they are also given instruction on the kindergarten

¹ Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, p. 65.

² Annual Factory Report, Bombay Presidency, 1936, p. 17.

basis in the morning ⁵ after the midday meal in the crèche they may lie down or sleep and are again given milk and biscuits. Periodical weighings are recorded to check development and factory doctors usually inspect the crèches and prescribe medicines and give medical treatment to sickly children. One important effect of the crèche system is that very few infants are now given opium by their mothers.¹

The need of providing crèches in all factories where considerable numbers of women are employed was stressed by the Government of India, women doctors and representatives of women's associations before the Royal Commission on Labour, and the Commission made a recommendation to that effect.² The substance of this recommendation was embodied in the Factories Act of 1934.

¹ *Crèches in Factories*, 1931, pp. 11-12.

² *Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India*, p. 66.

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing pages it has been shown that, although India is still essentially an agricultural country, the development of modern industrialism has proceeded apace during the past two generations. Already recognised as one of the States of chief industrial importance, and as such entitled to permanent Government representation on the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, India seems moreover to be destined to go much further along the road of industrialisation. There is no lack of power resources, raw materials and labour, and the potential home market for manufactured goods is one of the largest in the world. Another sign of continuing industrial expansion is that, although British enterprise and capital were the pioneers in establishing organised industry in India, indigenous enterprise and capital have been for some years in the field and are taking an increasingly active part in the commercial and industrial development of the country. Finally, owing to the constantly increasing population and the consequent growing pressure upon the land, as well as to the difficulties of indigenous handicrafts in competing with industrially developed countries for the supply of standardised goods even in the home market, the development of organised industry appears to many Indians to have become an imperative necessity for the economic future of India.

Organised industry in India is mainly concentrated in a few large centres, situated in different provinces and at considerable distances from each other. As industry expands, however, it is spreading to smaller centres and particularly in certain Indian States, which are not at present subject to the labour legislation passed by the British Indian Legislature, although they have in a number of cases themselves passed somewhat similar legislation. Only a relatively small proportion of the population is

employed in organised industry ; indeed the workers in organised industry comprise only about one-tenth of the people who depend upon wage-earning employment in agriculture and industry for their livelihood. Nevertheless, the number of wage-earners employed in factories, mines, plantations, transport, etc., has been estimated to be about five millions.

In addition to the problems of working conditions which are common to all industrial systems, there are in India a number of special problems due to the climate, the social organisation of the people and the conditions under which modern industry has developed. Moreover, only a proportion of the wage earners has as yet become a permanent and stable wage-earning class, the remainder, and probably the major part, consisting of villagers who only pass a longer or shorter period of their working lives in industrial employment.

This latter circumstance gives special importance to the question of the methods of obtaining and managing labour. At present systems of recruiting and managing labour are still in force, which developed partly because the pioneers of modern industry were Europeans who were unable to deal directly with their workers and partly because the inadequacy of local labour supply made outside recruiting indispensable. Considerable numbers of workers are therefore still engaged indirectly, i.e. through jobbers, sardars and other intermediaries. Some of these workers are employed directly under the recruiters acting as labour contractors, giving rise to complications in the full enforcement of the labour law, while others, though employed by the industry, remain largely under the control of jobbers and sardars. Various measures have been taken and recommendations made — by the Royal Commission on Labour in India, for example — but no means have yet been found to cope with the problem adequately in organised industry as a whole.

As in other countries, the attention of the legislator was called at an early stage in the development of industry to the need for the regulation of the employment of women and children. The prohibition of the employment of women and children in dangerous occupations was enacted in the early days of Indian industry, and has constantly been supplemented by measures for the protection of their health and safety and limiting the extent of their employment in other industrial activities.

The principle of fixing a minimum age for the admission of

children into employment has been established in the case of factories, mines and docks, and the minimum age has gradually been raised in respect of children employed in factories and mines. Children seeking employment in factories have to produce certificates of physical fitness for such work ; their employment at night is prohibited ; they may not be employed in mines ; their hours of work have been reduced in factories. Moreover, the system of pledging children under 15 years of age — that is, the mortgaging of the labour of such children by their parents or relatives — has been made illegal.

A special feature of child labour legislation in India is that children between 12 and 15 years of age may not be employed in factories for more than half the time fixed for adults ; moreover, recent legislation has created a new class of protected young persons or adolescents between 15 and 17 years of age who may not be employed in factories as adults or on underground work in mines unless their fitness for the work has been duly certified by the competent authorities. Considerable numbers of children are, however, still employed in small factories and workshops which are not yet subject to labour legislation, and the extension of the protection of the law to these children is gradually being recognised as one of the most urgent needs of industrial labour in India.

The regulation of the employment of women in factories and mines has involved the progressive limitation of their hours of work and the prohibition of their employment at night. In mines measures have been taken since 1929 for the prohibition of the employment of women below the surface, and at present this prohibition is complete. At present the matters connected with the employment of women to which attention is being directed are the need for women doctors and inspectors in industries in which women are employed in considerable numbers, and the extension of welfare arrangements.

As regards working conditions generally, it has been seen that hours of work have been limited in factories and mines, and on railways, and that provisions for the weekly rest have an increasingly wider operation. Legal provisions for health and safety have also been elaborated from time to time, and the Royal Commission found that health and safety arrangements were generally satisfactory in new and large undertakings, but that much remains yet to be done in seasonal and non-regulated fac-

tories, as well as in small mines and plantations. There is as yet no social insurance legislation in India other than the Workmen's Compensation Act, which has been recently amended and extended, and the five provincial Maternity Benefit Acts; legislation relating to insurance against sickness, old age and unemployment has not yet been enacted.

Important steps have recently been taken for the protection of the income of the Indian worker in legislation dealing with the methods and periods of payment of wages and the withholding of wages. Legislation has also been passed by the Government of Bengal to put an end to the practices of moneylenders recovering debts from workers by besetting the place of their work on pay day. The principle of the establishment of minimum-wage fixing machinery, when considered necessary, has been accepted by several provinces. On the other hand, the information given above concerning wage levels, the indebtedness of the workers and their standard of living shows that the economic position of the Indian workers is a matter requiring the urgent attention of all authorities who realise the importance of raising their social and economic status as well as of increasing their industrial efficiency.

In addition to the need for improved standards of income, nutrition and education, there is an urgent need for the provision of better housing accommodation, and the Royal Commission on Labour in India made elaborate recommendations for this purpose. A first step in the direction of giving effect to these recommendations has been taken by the enactment of legislation facilitating the acquisition by employers of suitable land for housing, and various suggestions to provincial authorities have in some cases been provisionally accepted or retained for further consideration.

Much is already being done for the alleviation and improvement of the lot of industrial workers by "welfare" activities, but there is very wide scope for the extension of this work, whether by employers, the workers themselves or outside organisations. The action of employers and outside agencies in this field is inevitably limited by financial considerations, and the workers themselves, except in a few instances where their organisations are exceptionally well developed, are too poor and illiterate to undertake intelligent and sustained work for their own welfare. The view is therefore held by many that there is a need for increased help

and activity on the part of Local Governments, municipalities and important semi-public bodies such as port trusts.

In the conditions of a country such as India, the need for the intervention of the State and local authorities in the regulation of labour conditions is of more than usual importance, and, as the foregoing chapters have shown, a considerable body of labour law has been enacted both by the central and provincial legislatures. Moreover, the enforcement of the law has been largely guaranteed by the administrative and inspection services that have been established for that purpose. Much, however, could be done both to increase the measure of adequate enforcement of labour law and to secure the improvement of labour conditions and efficiency generally by better organised industrial relations. The problem of industrial relations is one of considerable difficulty and importance in India, where trade unionism has not yet acquired a sufficient degree of strength and stability to conduct collective bargaining with the employers on a scale comparable with that usual in Western countries. Nevertheless, the influence of trade unions is a growing one and may be expected to increase with the provisions for representation in both national and provincial legislatures under the new Constitution. The development of legal provision for conciliation and arbitration between employers and workers is still in an early phase.

In terminating this short concluding note, some reference may be made to the influence of the International Labour Organisation on the evolution of the regulation of industrial conditions in India. It has been seen above that labour legislation in India was passed in the second half of the last century and the early part of the present century ; the first legislation for plantations was passed in 1863, for factories in 1881, for mines in 1901, and important amending and new legislation in the intervening years before 1919. The creation of the International Labour Organisation and the adoption by the International Labour Conference of the Draft Conventions and Recommendations would, however, appear to have given a new impetus to the development of labour legislation in India. As a result of this legislative activity, the Government of India had been able by 1936 to ratify and apply fourteen International Labour Conventions, as well as to give suitable effect to a number of Recommendations. In some other cases, where it has not been possible owing to local conditions to ratify and apply Conventions *ne varietur*, their principles have

been taken into consideration and applied as far as was deemed suitable.

The influence of the International Labour Organisation on the regulation of labour conditions in India has, however, been limited by two factors. To one reference has just been made : the unsuitability of the provisions of some Conventions for application in India at the present stage of its industrial development, a difficulty which could no doubt be partially remedied by the more thorough study of the possibility of inserting in the Conventions special provisions adapted to Indian conditions. The other factor has been the non-inclusion in the field of application of Conventions ratified by the Government of India of the industries and workers of the Indian States, which are not subject to the legislative jurisdiction of the Indian Central Legislature. The result has been that the obligations contracted by the ratification of Conventions by India have not extended to States whose total population is over 80,000,000 and which have in some cases attained a considerable degree of industrial development. However, as Mr. Harold Butler has pointed out, there are "indications of a growing realisation, at least in the larger States in which industrialisation has begun, of the need for regulating labour conditions. These efforts will doubtless be redoubled in the coming years by the statesmen responsible for the government of these States, who are keenly alive to the requirements of the times. Even so, the ratification of International Labour Conventions is likely to be a slow process. These formal difficulties may however, be counterbalanced by an intensified interest in the work of the Organisation and a more lively desire to profit by its wide and varied experience. The keen interest in social questions now becoming manifest in India seems to justify this expectation."

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